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A LIFE
FOR A LIFE





A LIFE FOR A LIFE



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TORONTO

A LIFE FOR A LIFE

BY

ROBERT HERRICK

AUTHOR OF "THE COMMON LOT," "TOGETHER,"
"THE MASTER OF THE INN"

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BEFORE

A LIFE FOR A LIFE

I

THE CHIMES AT DAWN

THE cracked bells were playing in the little wooden belfry of the old church. In an uncertain, quavering voice they announced some ancient festival that had been brought, with the wood and the brick of the building itself, from a distant land, an older people. In the fresh dawn of this New World morning they were celebrating the glory of a forgotten saint, — one whose halo was no longer radiant with symbolic meaning. Their quavering voice roused no tender echoes in this little American town. The early passers-by glanced indifferently at the open church, through whose doors an old woman was entering, and went about their business of the May morning, while others, just waking for the work of the day, heard the familiar voice of the chimes coming through streets and over roofs, but heeded it not.

Nevertheless, the cracked bells in the little belfry of the old church did not sound in vain that May morning. A youth asleep in an upper chamber of the adjoining house moved at their touch. The plaintive, hesitant chords of the tune penetrated the arena of his dreams, setting in vibration the complex stuff of his being and ordering the confused visions of his sleep in vivid pictures. He turned on his bed, a firm hand clutching an invisible object, a strong white arm curved beneath his head. The first rays of the sun fell upon his outstretched body and crept upwards to the smiling lips, spreading over the broad

brown face, touching the closed eyes, lighting with gold the thick curling hair, until the whole body of the youth lay bathed in a flood of warm golden light. Thus revealed, he had the beauty of a perfect body, — dark hair, moulded face, rounded muscles, firm, white flesh, — quiescent, undetermined force! Along the corded throat the pulses beat smoothly, and a dew of warm perspiration beaded his brow and curling hair. A clean young animal, full of health, almost of complete growth, with supple limbs and blooded flesh, he lay there in the morning sun, his eyes closed in that other world of dream, asleep and absent, nevertheless abounding with life.

The cracked chimes had summoned him from a confused action of battling images, tenebrous with the cloud of night, and their uncertain notes stealing through his muffled consciousness had roused dim sensations, denied to waking moments, coloring the atmosphere of his being with strange and beautiful emotion. The chords of the cracked bells touched mysterious depths within him, unawakened, and thence issued a wonderful flood of sound and form. He was borne upwards into vast space where noble figures were ever sweeping past, and the air was vibrant with a mighty symphony, rising and falling on the swift wind. The faces of beautiful men and women shone upon him, and one spoke, a woman folded in a golden cloud, — spoke as she passed him on the wings of music, smiling in welcome.

“Come!” she said, passing.

And the dreamer in a great longing cried, “Whither?” But she had gone upwards into the cloudy periphery of his world, and straining after her he was lifted into a vaster panorama where events not understood but of great moment fired him with desire and purpose. Something in this super-human world was going forward, not yet revealed, but of utmost significance, in which his part must be played. The

strains of the great symphony filled his ears sweetly; his whole being was a-quiver with joy and desire. This suffused atmosphere of the dream world irradiated his being, like the flood of sunlight poured over his body: it filled him with strength and love and large happiness, — an Olympian fullness of self, sensuous in intensity, welling mysteriously from within. And all this grand world about the youth, while the feeble bells quavered out the notes of an ancient tune, ringing outward into the joyous May morning their metallic message, but wafting this sleeping one abroad above the earth by the magic of their sound! . . . “Come!” the beautiful one sang in his ears, and far beyond in the dim glory of things he saw again her face, smiling, inviting. . . .

The chimes ceased, the ringer having rounded out his simple tune, and the sleeper stirred, relaxing his straining arms. He opened his eyes to a broad beam of sunlight, winked in misty confusion, trying to fuse the two worlds in which he found himself. Still under the charm of that larger state of dream, he sought vainly to recall the images which had been a part of his ineffable feeling, and above all the radiant face of the dream woman who had spoken. In vain! Slowly under the eye of the sun the waking world asserted itself, revealing the dull outlines of his attic chamber. He gathered the familiar threads of his existence in their wonted association. There was the bare, uncurtained room, warm with golden sun. His clothes lay tumbled upon the floor, and a book was sprawled open on the counterpane where he had dropped it the night before — a manual of commercial arithmetic. Thus he remembered himself. He closed his eyes, shutting out the fact, inviting the dream. Still in the mirage of that wonderful inner radiance of feeling that had been stirred by the cracked bells, suffused with the sense of vast beauty and peace under the shadowy architec-

ture of a spacious, harmonious world, he lay in the sunlight, trying to preserve the sweetness of his vision as one might strive to recall the melody that has passed beyond the ear. It was fading, this marvellous vision, fading as the sun crept warmly over his body and gilded the drab walls of the attic chamber, — fading before the day that was to be. . . . The bells quivered again, with the jubilant notes of a triumphant hymn, quaintly moving upwards in a peal of affirmation, — an old, old song of Faith, soothing the hearts of believers. The youth leaped from his bed and strode to the window.

There was the earth! It was almost as beautiful as the radiant vision of his dream, — dew on the grass plot before the old church, soft plumes of fresh-leaving trees, velvety breasts of gentle hills beyond the dingy little wooden town. The cool breath of the opening earth touched his bare flesh. Below in the churchyard the first green things were pushing upwards from the dark mould. The tiny leaves of the maple were reddish, and beyond, whence came the sun flooding over the roofs of the town, the feathery foliage of the elms was misty gray upon the hills, telling of spring about to bloom. As the youth hung there, drinking the morning, the factory bell from the paper mill below broke harshly into the final peal of the chimes. A street car ground noisily around the curve at the corner. Men and women by twos and threes began to pass: the day of the world of work had begun. But the youth lingered with his eyes upon the golden hills.

A thin voice came upwards from the church. "Forgive us our trespasses. . . ." The youth's lips curved in a smile. He beheld the land of desire behind the hills, — the greening fields, the dark woods, and far away to the eastward at the mouth of the mill river the level marshes, through whose still, black channels flowed the tides, and then a margin of glistening sand, and beyond all the cold, dark sea, the open sea!

And life flamed in his blood with exultation and desire. The voice of the minister in the church beneath beat querulously, — "We beseech thee, O Lord!" . . . The open sea! It called to the listening youth across the hills, over the dingy roofs of the town. "We beseech thee . . . miserable sinners!"

The youth thrust himself hastily into his clothes and stole down through the silent house. A door opened on the floor below, and a dishevelled woman, clutching a faded wrapper about her ample shoulders, demanded sleepily: —

"What's the matter, Hugh! Where you going at this time of day?"

"I'm going — away!" the youth called back.

"Don't you want your breakfast?" — and to the impatient gesture of denial she replied, a note of alarm in the sleepy voice, — "When will you be back?"

"Oh," called the impatient youth, his hand upon the door handle, "I don't know, Nell!"

The woman gave up her questioning, vaguely troubled. A child's voice came plaintively from the bedroom, and the youth paused at the threshold, then pulled the door behind him, shutting out this household world that would lay hands upon him, eager to pursue the fading vision of the dawn over the hills into the sunrise beside the open sea. As he passed the church, the priest's thin voice still uttered prayer. In the street there were now many hurrying figures, obeying the summons of the factory bell, shambling to the day's toil with bent head and sleepy eyes. That was his path, also — to the task. But to-day he would flee. The vision still held him close in its embrace, and he was fearful lest the glories of that inner world might utterly fade, the melody die, at the touch of familiar fact. His eyes upon the hills beyond, he hastened down the street, past the long brick mill, through the dingy heart of the town, glancing here

and there at some scene of his bondage. In the room beneath that sprawling sign, — THE NATIONAL COMMERCIAL COLLEGE, — the rudiments of business usage had been driven into his unwilling mind, to fit him for the struggle. But this glorious day he would leave the struggle behind. He was due somewhere beyond, quickened with impulse that could not be translated into business terms.

Mere sensuous love of the strong new year, this, — youth meeting youth, and the lure of the unknown world; but stronger than all was the vision of that dream whose fragrance hung still about him, lifting his eyes upwards, beckoning him from the gloomy house beside the church, from the dark mill town. So his eager steps turned outwards to the leafy hillside, pressed onwards into the sun.


The tunes rung by the cracked chimes had other ends, the youth well knew, — to spur man into the path of duty and sacrifice, denial of self, the stony ascending way to God. Strangely they had fired him to rebellion! Careless of present and future, he swung on, heading vaguely towards that Something Beyond which is promised to youth, where sweet Desire and harsh Fact become fused in harmony. The music of his dream land, so wondrously beautiful, rang faintly in his ears, making melody for his evading footsteps. There might never be for him a return to the town, — the thought lay somewhere within; for this road led to crossroads whence other roads stretched on into the endless space of the wide world. And within their reach was the glorious life, — beauty and peace, deeds and reward, — somewhere to be found *his* life, himself. For the youth was young with the year!

Meantime he was leaving the last straggling houses of the town behind him. He smiled at the spruce dwelling of the mill-owner, with shaven lawn and plate-windows. It was a neat world of fact for this one! The road

mounted now, parting from the river, winding among the hills, and as the road climbed the spirits of the youth rose to the buoyant mood of venture. What lay beyond, around that turn? A lumber wagon, creeping with creaking caution towards the town. At the next turn a man passed him riding swiftly on a bicycle, and twisting his head he looked inquiringly. The youth smiled, waved a careless hand to the one bound for the town and the day's business — such a man as should be, intent upon the work of this life. The youth laughed in gay irony and flung himself down beneath a glossy pine tree.

The little hilltops lifted on to other little hilltops, all gently rolling fold upon fold toward the sea. The trees were leaving from the bud, throwing filmy, lacelike shadows from their branches, and beside the road and in the fields water trickled freely, running from the awakening earth to the great sea beyond. . . .

Thus gay, with careless step, nevertheless holding to one direction as if steered by an unseen hand, the youth threaded the hills until he came to a small village, set between two low ridges. He quickened his steps as he reached the familiar stretch of road between dark willow trunks. The old trees made a tunnel for the road, and the memory of childhood fears at this forbidding passage seized him. Beyond the willows the road trickled in friendly fashion between turfy edges, with a grass-grown mound down the centre, as it did when he raced through its solitude with bare feet. Meadows already delicately green lay on either side, — part of old Larry Todd's many-acred farm. A brook gurgled in a rich golden flood across the road. He knew every inch of the way: it was filled with his woes and his joys. Through that black tunnel made by the thick willow branches he had often fled homewards in fear of a tramp, — some unfamiliar figure seen slouching along the road. Dark nights he had



driven over this road, marvelling at the skill with which the horse chose his footing, expecting momentarily an apparition to loom forth from the dark. In winter mornings he had ploughed through its untraced whiteness; in summer he had sweated toilsomely, tugging at some burden. For here, in this small neglected corner of the world, — this country by-path, — he had lived his early years until his people had taken the worn road to the town. In the unpainted house beside a meadow, now empty and shining drearily from its curtainless windows as with the eyes of age looking forth upon the green earth, the youth had once lived. He pressed his face close to one of the small panes, and stared in at the forlorn desertion of the familiar room. Scraps of paper torn from the walls lay upon the floor, and a clutter of rubbish, the feathers of the family abandoning its old nest. The place seemed weary of living. He turned away, a chord of pity in his heart. Across the road was the gaunt barn. Here in a dark haymow old man Grant had found him one morning when he came there for his early milking. The youth had often heard the story from the old man. "There you lay asleep, the first any one hereabouts had seen of you, — a baby not more'n three months old. You just floated up to us out of the world, and nobody ever could tell where you come from!" . . .

The old man had taken him into his house and cared for him as one of his own. When the family had moved to the mill town, he had gone like the others to live with the married daughter, that large, slatternly woman, Nell, and there he had got such schooling as the fading fortunes of the family permitted. Now old man Grant was dead, his own sons scattered over the country, and he, standing at the door of the shabby nest, was about to take flight also. The empty house stared at him from its sad-aged eyes, and the youth hastened on. Presently a shadow appeared, a fat shadow

that brushed the pines on either side of the narrow road. It was a heavy load of yellow hay drawn by two panting horses. The driver was buried in the hay, his head a tiny black spot in the yellow.

"An early start Todd must have made from the marsh this morning!" the youth thought, and as the yellow load crept nearer he shouted, "Hello! Uncle Larry!"

A wrinkled little face popped up from the soft hay, and a pair of small sharp eyes looked down at the youth. A kindly grin parted the thin, bristling lips, as the old man said:—

"That you, Hugh? What you doin' here this time of day?"

The big horses stopped and, turning their heads, looked inquiringly at the stranger.

"Oh, I just thought I'd come out and see the old place."

"So!" The farmer rubbed his upper lip meditatively, trying to fit this vague explanation into his private scheme of things as they are. Having rubbed his stubbled chin while entertaining various hypotheses, — neglecting the only right one, which was the sap of youth, — he fell back upon further questioning:—

"All right with the folks?"

Hugh nodded.

"Still goin' to school?"

"No — not since father died. Got a job — keeping books."

"So!" murmured the little old man, reflecting further upon the job that kept itself while its owner loafed in the country.

"Goin' fishin'?"

"Hadn't thought about it."

"Well, come up to the house for dinner."

"Thanks — perhaps I will — later."

The farmer grinned again in benevolent surprise, chirped friskily to his horses, and rumbled on, cushioned in his load of salty hay, which left behind it a wake of yellow streamers clinging to the pine branches. The youth stood idly watching the yellow load until it was engulfed in the tunnel among the willows. He, too, had his thoughts.

That was a familiar figure of toil, the bent little old man nodding on his seat in the soft mass of yellow hay — toil from dawn to dark, from season to season, the patient half-animal toil of the farmer, gleaning the scanty fruit of these thin acres. He wondered. Uncle Larry Todd — he was some connection of old man Grant — had been bent like this, and furrowed, when the youth was a boy and lived in the abandoned house. Even then he was gathering in the acres of his less patient or fortunate neighbors until all the land on either side of the road for a mile or more was his, — the pines, the orchards, the meadows, the pastures, — even Grant's deserted home. Like a creeping, acquisitive creature he was slowly covering the entire village, adding acre to acre with blind faith in land. Some day soon he must die and leave his farms to young Percy Todd, who had been away at college and now was venturing for himself in the great City, and to his daughter May, the youth's old playmate, who also had been "put forward in the world" as much as a country girl might be, to the reach of a superior education. . . . A kind, sweet heart the old man had, and in earlier years a lively twinkle of wit, as Hugh knew well. But toil had bent him early, the desire to possess. He would "do well by the children." And for them the soft beds and the ease of life — opportunity so golden in this land of promise — which he had foregone. This very morning he had set forth before dawn from the chilly marsh, with a breakfast of cold coffee and a piece of stale bread. Such might have been his own life, Hugh reflected, missed by the

merest accident because Nell had chosen to marry a man from the mill town. He shrugged his shoulders, and stepped lightly down the soft road.

Yes, he should go to the old farmhouse, in whose roomy kitchen he had eaten many a meal, and later, when the hands were gone and the farmer had returned to his eternal task, he would have some talk with the girl.

For that, too, must have lain in the background of his mind.

II

THE MOSSY ROAD BENEATH THE PINES

BEHIND the red-roofed cider-mill a wood-road ran through a neglected orchard into a deep wood of dark pines. The ancient apple trees scattered among the feathery growth of young pines still blossomed in spring and brought a few withered apples to fruit. A thicket of hazel bushes and blackberry vines concealed the foundation stones where once — before the memory of the Todds — there had been a dwelling. But the pines, ever encroaching upon the orchard and reclaiming their own to silence and fragrant solitude, topped the gnarled fruit trees with waving plumes of tender green. Beneath them the earth was cushioned with a moist carpet of moss, which covered the old road, dimpling in curves and ridges. Lying on this cool bed beneath the pines, one might look down a dim vista of dead branches among the thicker trees of the woods beyond. It was still and dusk within the pines, and overhead the green plumes waved softly in a field of pure azure. . . .

This spot Hugh Grant had seen all the morning, — the old road running through the orchard into the twilight forest. As a boy he had played about the pungent cider-mill, then ventured a little way into the orchard tangle, skirting the mystery of the unknown forest. Then in bolder years he had explored the winding road until he found its end in a broad swamp, from which oozed a stream that trickled towards the sea. He remembered the morning twilight of the pines, their cool remoteness from the busy roads of men. Now at last, as the sun began to slope westwards, he lay on the soft moss,

gazing up through the dead branches of the pines to the cloudless sky. And seated beside him a girl was plucking carelessly at the spirals of the green moss. May Todd was large and very fair, with soft white hands. She said little, but time and again glanced in full friendly fashion at the youth stretched out upon the moss. As he seemed lost in the space above his head, she fell to words.

"Father said you had gone to work."

"Yes."

There had been other plans for this foundling, she knew, ambitious ones, as seemed to fit his ability, but those were in the days when old Grant was alive and prospering. Then Hugh was to have taken up the old man's former profession, become a surveyor, and seek his fortune in a new country. Now he was a clerk in a shop and kept books. The girl said: —

"You won't be staying in that town long—there's not much life there!"

The youth made a vague gesture.

"Percy likes the City. He's doing finely in business," she added, with a touch of pride.

"So I heard."

"He wants father to put some money in the firm. But you know father: land is the only thing he cares for."

"He has plenty of it."

"I should say so! Old stony fields. . . . I'd like to go to the City the same as Percy;" and then, in mutinous tone, "If it weren't for father, I'd not be here long."

The man was free to venture, the woman tied to some dull duty. And the easiest way to break the cord of duty was to knit another! She looked gently at the youth.

"What do you want to go away for?" he exclaimed. For the moment the best spot in all the world seemed to him just here behind the old mill in the shadow of the silent pines.

"I'd like to live before I'm too old!" the girl retorted, plucking heatedly at the soft moss. "Anybody would!" That a girl pretty and quite alive to what life might hold of pleasure and triumph for her should be content to drudge on in a dull corner of the universe like this, while youth ran out, was plainly stupid.

"Maybe it's much the same there — in the City," he suggested idly.

"That depends on what you are good for," she replied positively. "All the clever ones try their luck in the City. You know Jim Read? He's in a bank. And the Reads weren't much at home. His sister Nancy is going to marry a man she knew through Jim."

She sighed. All things were open in the city, the great City! And life — this life — was speeding by, all the life that she was to have.

"Perhaps I'll go there some day," the youth mused. "Father expected me to go."

"Of course! You'd do well in the City. You'd get your chance there!"

She looked on him, and the youth looked back into her eyes. Then his glance fell to the soft white hand half buried in the moss.

"You would like to live in the City?"

"Of course!"

His hand met hers, and held it timidly, and the smile faded from his lips. The girl looked away, still playing in the moss with her free hand. . . .

It was the first amorous boldness of youth! The girl's warm white hand still lay in his, and she stole a glance at him that said, —

"Well, I like you. . . . What does it mean — for me?" Her breath fluttered through half-open lips. His face drew closer to hers. Another wave, impulse of youth,

leaping up between the two — and their lips had met. Then moments, while a bird chirped softly in the tree above. Moments! The yielding curve of her breast pressed against his heart. His eyes, warm and vivid, met hers, veiled and soft. Her lips trembled on his. . . . And suddenly the blue went out from the heaven of his glorious day. The touch of the girl's warm lips had somehow curdled the milk of his youth, and his heart became heavy. Withdrawing herself from his embrace, the girl looked at him accusingly, yet invitingly.

"Hugh!" she murmured.

About to bloom and sweet as the May day, she craved him, the lovable youth. Hands and lips, having touched, would play the play again, deny and yield, in the eternal game.

But with the youth not so! Hers was not the face that had smiled upon him in the clouds of the morning dream, and now, his will crossed by this impulse of youth, tangled in the mystery of sex, he felt the bitter loss of the ethereal one, who had ridden in gold upon the heights and spoken in song. She was gone, and the tender mood of mystery that she had thrown about his day. . . . With that first kiss a fiery thing had leaped in his blood, the surge of sex, and in its light he saw the sentimental fancy for what it was — soft mask of the animal. The face of lust gleamed behind the blush of sentiment. And he began to know himself. . . . But there was the girl by his side, with her kissed lips still parted, glancing at him tenderly from her long-lashed eyes. He turned away.

Soon they were walking together through the dark wood, he striding a little ahead, impatiently, the girl tripping after him with reproachful eyes, then sidling close, her fingers slipping into his with gentle caress.

Thus the farmer, who in a neighboring field was running a

deep furrow through the fertile earth behind his horses, beheld the two hand in hand, and paused to look thoughtfully after the girl and the youth. So, thought the old man, this was the secret of the boy's holiday! And now he got but half the cause. Hugh was only a foundling, and David Grant in his failing fortune had not been able to do for him what he had intended. But Hugh was a clever, likable fellow, able to make his way into the world for himself. The farmer cast his eye over some of those acres, despised by his children, so painfully scraped together, field by field, and frowned, then chirped to his horses, knowing in his heart that in spite of all his care for his posterity, whatever the girl would, she could. And he ploughed his furrow.

But the girl, side by side with the youth, now glancing down, now shyly looking into his face and gently pressing the captive hand, was not sure that what she would she could! For since their lips had met, something hard and stern had entered that youth's fair face. It was safer for the moment to fall back upon the objective world; moreover, she had her thought.

"How's Nell?" she asked.

"Just as always."

"I should think it would be hard for her since her father died. Is Nat any better to her?"

"No — about the same."

"Too bad! She was crazy for him, though. . . . It can't be the same for you since the old man died."

"It isn't."

After the lapse of a few moments, insinuatingly, "Then what do you stay for?"

"Well —" he began vaguely and broke off. He did not like to voice the feeling that kept him faithful to his foundering ship. When he had drifted up helpless out of the wide world to the old man's haymow, he had been taken by kind

hands. Now that his benefactor had gone, leaving behind him helpless ones, — the shiftless woman and her young, — he could not forget the bond, all the more as those brothers of full blood seemed careless of its claims.

"Nell needs me," he explained at last, "and the kids."

"You can't be doing for them always," the girl urged, practically. "You've no call to, as I see."

"No — I suppose not —"

"Mr. Grant wanted you to go out West."

"Yes — father thought I'd better strike out for myself."

"Well," the girl replied slowly, her quick mind working upon this positive problem, "you've got your own life to live! Even if Nell were your own sister, she'd have to manage somehow. She married the man."

"It's pretty hard on the children."

"They'd better come back here," she said firmly, the plan forming. "I'll speak to father about it. He needs some one in the house besides me." Her idea developed into pleasant possibilities. "Nat'll never do anything for them. And she can have a good home for herself and the children —"

"It might be best, if Nat isn't any better," he admitted.

"Nat!" the girl exclaimed scornfully. "I'll speak to father about it to-night."

She smiled upon the youth, happy in the solution so promptly found, a sense of proprietorship already sprouting within her, the instinct for managing destiny.

"Then you'll be free to do the best you can," she urged. "You can go to the City."

Hugh gazed musingly over the level field, at the further end of which the old man was driving his furrow. The City! The lure of youth, the battle ground and the burial field, the tournament and the pageant — yes, it drew him as it was

drawing all the strong youth of the land. It lay far away to the southward under its smoky dome, and its very existence below the peaceful horizon stirred restlessness and desire.

"Maybe," he admitted. "I must be going back now."

"Won't you stay to supper?" she urged. "I'll drive you down afterwards."

"No, I can't." Something in him made him eager to slip the soft leash this pretty girl was fast binding upon his will. "Not to-day."

He seized the upper bar of the gate on which they had been leaning.

"Sunday, then?" she suggested, and her lifted face reproached him for a possible neglect. He waited. Something was due — something born of that vagrant impulse beneath the pine. Clumsily he bent his head; coldly his lips met hers; with hard eyes he looked into soft eyes. Impulse must be paid with full measure. Nevertheless, the beast did not lurk this time behind the mask.

Without further word he flung himself over the gate and took the road that led towards the sea. The girl leaning by the bar watched him fade upon the road, then slowly turned in the direction of the farmer, planning a quick result for her idea. The seed for which she had been waiting had dropped out of the blue sky this May day, and she was prompt to make it her own.

But the youth tramped on his way, head down, in gloomy understanding with himself. His feet were heavy, and he walked slowly. Where had flown the vision of the morning that had flooded him with happiness at the dawning of the sun? The day was still fair, and the familiar country sweet with promise. But all the grandeur and the meaning and the beauty — the stuff of life — had faded out of his day. The melody was gone, and in its place was the bitter taste that the girl's lips had left. This day he had held heaven in his heart for a

time, and now a heavy weight lay there instead, — truth revealed at the touch of woman!

From the crest of a round smooth hill, he saw the gleaming surface of the sea. The waves broke in a white line where the sea touched the sandy shore of an island. At the bottom of the hill the flat marshland began, smooth with tender grass dotted by brown stacks of last year's hay. Through its winding creeks the tide was threading inland, and a salty odor came up the hilltop to him. That breath of the sea made memories leap — it was the travel-scent, which swept him towards the world beyond! Many a time in his boyhood he had come here, as now, to look forth upon the sea and wonder. Had he himself come up from it, brought by father or mother across its furrowed reach from some distant land? To-day, this very minute, he might yield to its call, slip down to the port at the river's mouth, and take ship for the unknown.

May Todd, in conference with her father, little knew that she had prepared the path for such an adventure, that this human destiny she purposed to direct was so close to an escape from her touch. The fruit of her counsel was dangerous. . . .

Lingeringly the youth turned his back upon the inviting sea. Some other day! For the past still held him: there was the bond, not yet released.

III

AGAIN WOMAN CROSSES YOUTH'S ROAD

IMPERCEPTIBLY gray clouds had filmed the clear blue of the sky, as if a depth of heaven too dazzling for mortal eye must be veiled. As Hugh's steps approached the town, the sky was thickly laced with cloud, and fitful gleams of a watery sunshine were all that penetrated the western horizon. Absorbed in perplexed consideration, he took no note of the weather.

While he was resting at a cross-roads before entering the last valley, a riderless horse came clattering down the road from the north, bearing a handsome new side-saddle. The pace was a leisurely gallop, as though the horse, having spent his first mad impulse, had time to notice the surroundings and enjoy his accomplished freedom. At sight of the young man seated beneath the sign-post, the runaway stopped short, snorted, then with delicate deliberation prepared to dash past this possible obstacle to his freedom. Proclaiming his spirit with a wave of his tail, he trotted slowly forward. It was a lively, handsome beast, more playful than wild, and the young man, reaching out suddenly his hand, was lucky enough to catch the loose curb and wise enough to humor the captive by running a few steps with him until he could bring him to a stand. There were angry glances from the large brown eyes, but the animal accepted capture with some grace.

"A fine beast!" the youth thought, wondering whether he could mount him and thus ride back up the north road

until he met the owner. But the aristocratic art of horsemanship not having come within his experience, he concluded that the safer course would be to lead the animal. Patting his smooth neck, he turned him around. The horse examined his captor, snorted once or twice, then consented to walk calmly by the youth's side. A short space up the road, SHE was discovered, sitting meditatively on a boulder, staring at the landscape and occasionally poking her riding whip through a large rent in her broadcloth skirt.

"So you caught him!" she cried joyfully, as Hugh approached with her horse. "The last I saw of him, he was going as if he did not mean to pull up this season. Oh, you tricky beast!" She rubbed the horse's muzzle with the tip of her whip. His large brown eyes winked before her rebuke. To the youth she turned with a swift glance of examination, — "However did you get him?"

"He came along where I was sitting, and I just put out a hand."

She laughed at this simple tale, and looked at the stranger frankly, with no self-consciousness or trace of feminine manoeuvre. And he looked back at her with keen interest.

She was nearly of his height, but youthfully slight. Her face was regular and large, indicating a coming development of the woman, and was firmly defined by the line of brow and chin and nose. Her hair had a dark gold edge to the curling clusters, almost bronze in tone, and the thick eyelashes were of the same color. She was of his age and May Todd's, he judged, but she had an older air than the farmer's daughter, though less flowered and more finely made. In spite of the ugly riding costume, which did its best to disguise whatever girlish grace there was, she gave forth a special atmosphere of one with a distinct background. The youth, having scant experience of social differences, felt this

special quality in the girl of something nurtured, rare, adorned. It lay in her controlled voice, her free movements, her direct, unconscious glance.

The smiling lips revealed her perfect teeth, firm, polished, regular, as if they, like everything that touched her person, had been the subject of a minute care and perfect skill. About her neck was twisted a chain of fine-threaded gold, — a child's ornament, — yet, like the girl herself, rich and delicate in mesh and pattern, as though selected from a multitude of costly toys for one who had privilege of choice in all material things. Insensibly the youth beholding her knew that she came of a different world from his, — a world richer, freer, more privileged. His eyes went from the yellow band about the small white neck — symbol of human pride — to the deep blue eyes set beneath perfectly curving brows. The eyes were pleasant and kind.

"You like horses?" she suggested, by way of filling the awkward pause, while she still rubbed the beast's muzzle. The horse, like its mistress, was carefully groomed and cared for, — a smart animal kept for pleasure. Hugh suddenly felt conscious of his slouchy, wrinkled, ill-fitting clothes and his unpolished boots.

"I don't have much to do with horses," he replied. "I used to when I was a boy — farm horses," he added, with an awkward laugh. "They were not much like him!"

"Max is a beauty!"

"Can I help you get on?"

She pointed to the large rent in her skirt.

"I couldn't ride with that skirt! It can't be far to the town from here, is it?"

"No — shall I show you the way?"

He led the horse while she wrapped her torn skirt about her, and in this fashion they proceeded towards the town. The intelligent animal glanced from one to the other, as if

puzzled by the catenation of circumstances for which he was responsible. The girl explained:—

"I wanted to see the game at the Academy this afternoon, and thought I would ride over. I had no business to take Max, — he's father's special mount, — but my horse was lame. Father was away, and Max hadn't been out for a week. I couldn't hold him!"

"Did he hurt you?"

"Not a bit! Max just bore with me and the hateful side-saddle as long as he could, then up with his forefeet, deposited me carefully on the road, looked around to see if all was right, and scuttled off like mad downhill. You see, I forgot to put on the martingale, or he couldn't have done it!"

They laughed at the story together. Hugh marvelled at the magic which had created at once so simple and friendly an atmosphere between them. For girls as he had known them were either shy or bold.

"Don't you ride?" she asked, with another glance at his strong young figure. His curt "no" seemed to say, "Can't you see that I am not likely to have saddle horses for my pleasure?" And reading the tone, she softened him easily, "You ought to try it—it's the best sport in the world."

The simple remark led the youth to reflect that this young girl, whom chance had brought across his path at the close of the day, was of those who considered "sport" seriously, — for whom life was a more or less ordered diversion. She had thrown herself on horseback to ride a half score of miles that she might see a game of baseball. . . .

In their approach to the town they passed the mill, and the urchins playing in the street before the tenements jeered at them, and the bolder ones threw stones, which rattled harmlessly behind them.

"Little rats!" the girl exclaimed, with perfect good nature.

"I wonder why they always raise a hand against any one on horseback."

"Perhaps because their ancestors were often ridden down by men on horseback," Hugh replied, with unexpected quickness. He felt suddenly a kinship with these "little rats."

"You think that's the reason? They must make mistakes sometimes in their victims," the girl replied tranquilly, ignoring the vehemence of his retort.

A little way beyond the mill lay the grounds of the old Academy. They turned in at the stone gate Hugh still leading the horse.

IV

THE BATTLE TO THE STRONG

THE Academy was a famous old school, antedating the mill by half a century, which had fallen into decay before the advance of more democratic education, but latterly had been revived under a new "English" management, with fresh glories of another order than its ancient prestige — chiefly athletic and social. As such it had little in common with the dingy town, which was wholly centred in the mill. The main building that still survived the changes, an old stone mansion, surmounted a little hill at the end of a drive between two rows of horse-chestnut trees, and behind it in the meadow along the river was the athletic field, where a game of baseball was now in progress between the Academy team and the school team of the town.

As the two entered the drive from the dusty highroad, the setting sun had contrived to pierce the filmy veil of clouds and shot a mellow light upon the smooth sward of the meadow beside the river. Through the large trees, already thick with foliage, something of the dingy town crowned by the lofty brick chimney of the mill with its plume of black smoke could be seen, — close at hand, yet removed from the seclusion and repose of the athletic field. There the game was set, and a little group of spectators were gathered about the lines.

It was a scene that the youth was to remember long. Many a time in the years to follow it would flash back into his mind at unexpected moments, offering a complete symbol of that larger world where he found himself. The memory of it be-

came all the more vivid because of this girl, whom fate had associated with him. She led the way to the group about the Master, — a tall, florid man in tweed knickerbockers, smiling encouragement to his boys. On the other side of the diamond were a few friends of the town team, who had loafed into the grounds to see "our boys lick the Academy swells." There was nothing intentional in this partition of the classes. The old school had been eminently democratic, and the new Master had much to say in his prospectus in praise of the democratic spirit. Nevertheless, Hugh Grant, standing with the girl not far from the Master and looking across to familiar faces on the other side, was conscious of being misplaced.

"That's my brother Morris!" the girl exclaimed, pointing out a lank boy in the field who wore glasses. "Too bad," she murmured with vexation, as the youth missed an easy ball, and fumbled awkwardly about his feet. "He's too near-sighted to play — and he doesn't care for sport. Aleck — he's my older brother — was captain of his college team."

A contemptuous laugh had risen from the town side of the field at Morris's clumsy efforts.

"What a rabble! *Canaille!*" She threw a deal of scorn into the foreign word, and her pretty lips curved in disdain. Hugh had been inclined to laugh at the lad's clumsy antics, and looked his surprise.

A youth on the Academy team leaped high in the air and intercepted Morris's wild throw.

"Bravo! Well played!" She clapped her hands and demanded, "Do you know who he is?"

"It's Jack Nevins — his father is superintendent of the mill," Hugh explained. He felt that young Nevins, purely a town product, was something of a renegade to play on the Academy team.

"He knows how to play!" the girl remarked admiringly. She followed the fortunes of the game, absorbed in it, skilled

in its points, applauding and criticising individual plays with an expert air. Presently Hugh's attention was distracted by the sight of old Todd's covered buggy, drawn by one of the big grays, which had stopped close to the fence. From where he stood Hugh could plainly see that one of the two girls in the buggy was May, hatless, dressed in puffy, starchy white. She was scanning the field closely, and Hugh felt that he ought to leave his companion and go to her. But he stayed. Soon the buggy turned back to the gate and came in down the drive towards the game. As it skirted the field, it passed Hugh and the girl, and May gazed steadily at the two together beside the horse. She leaned from the buggy, bowed elaborately, and, still looking, drove slowly around to the town side, where she established herself in plain eyeshot of the two opposite. Hugh reddened, but he held his place. The look and the bow had not been lost by the girl at his side. She saw his blush, and she knew with a telepathic feminine assurance that there was something between these two.

"A relative of mine," Hugh felt compelled to explain.

"Oh," the girl replied, in a tone of polite aloofness, and added after a moment of consideration, "A very pretty girl!"

Then her attention was called back to the game.

"That was unfair! He didn't touch him. Oh, low — shame!" she called quite audibly. "The umpire couldn't see," she explained to Hugh. "They ought to make those fellows play fair — teach them to be good sports."

Hugh resented the condescension in the tone towards "those fellows." At the moment he saw nothing very important in the trick of the baseman. Some day he would learn that to play fair was a class ideal — in sport, and then he would recall the phrase with ironical mirth, knowing how little of this ideal there was in the weightier matters of life.

"Squabbling as usual," was the next comment that Hugh caught. "They don't know how to take their medicine — no sand. That's the way their kind always do when they lose — scrap!"

Here was another ideal, also phrased irritatingly in a superior tone. "Taking your medicine," as well as "playing fair," was a shibboleth of the "other sort." And some day he would learn how precious is the possession of any ideal, in sport or life, a kind of religious support, especially to those who are engaged in breaking other ideals that do not happen to appeal to them.

"You don't seem to care for the game," she observed after a time, curiosity and scorn mingled in her tone.

"Not much," he confessed.

"Don't you play?"

"I used to a little in the country when I was a boy."

He recalled the squabbles, the petty tricks of the village boys, the quite unsportsmanlike nature of their sports. What would this young aristocrat think of their manners!

The girl's eyes were fastened once more on the game.

"Pretty! Oh, pretty!" She was waving her hands excitedly as young Nevins, having placed a long, low, clean ball through the centre of the town's weak field, was taking advantage of his hit in a breathless race around the bases.

"A home run! Oh! They'll beat 'em yet in spite of their tricks." This last, Hugh felt, was aimed at him as a suspected sympathizer with the "mob." He patted the horse, who stared at the game in stolid indifference, mildly flicking an ear at the clamor over the successful play. The girl eyed them both with a disdainful smile.

"You don't care any more than Max which side wins!"

What kind of youth was this who lacked the sense for sport? Not a weakling by appearance, nor a coward surely!

"Perhaps you would like to join your friend?" she sug-

gested in dainty malice. "I can take care of Max—he's quiet enough now."

Hugh smiled at the dart, and did not relinquish the rein he held. He was conscious that May awaited him; her eyes had not left them all this time. But he had no mind to go to her. And when presently the farmer's buggy turned and slowly made its way back to the drive, he did not lift his eyes. There was something in this girl by his side, the chance companion of the day, that held him fast. Yet her every word and gesture stirred unwonted prejudices.

"No, I don't care which side wins," he admitted, at another outburst of applause. "It doesn't make any great difference, does it?"

The girl threw him a cold glance. No difference which side won, and *her* side gaining in spite of the mean tricks of the commonalty! She did not deign to answer.

"Oh, see there!" she cried, as Nevins again distinguished himself by striking out the third one of the town team. "That Nevins is most as good as Aleck. I'd like to know him. He's such a good sport!"

There, the youth felt instinctively, was the woman attitude toward the whole affair. The game was a mimic struggle in which the strong triumphed, to be rewarded by her applause, her favor. For the moment he envied Jack Nevins, who at the Master's tea after the game would receive the girl's homage. If the youth had known it, he would have realized the centuries of tradition expressed in this trivial incident: the woman an eager spectator while the young males fought for supremacy. She would reward the victor—that strong one—who had the might to capture her, to protect her against the others. This game was but a petty imitation of universal strife,—a training for the struggle, the tricks, the gore, that must be met in the more deadly battle for existence. This delicate girl by his side knew to

the full what victory meant. Her girlish admiration of the successful Nevins was woman's fated attitude to man: she stood beside the arena, observing the struggle, ready to reward with her graces that Male who was strong enough to triumph! . . .

The youth's eyes were troubled with these perceptions. Across the scene of the mimic battle rose the vision that had come to him at dawn, sung to him by the cracked chimes, — the vision pursued over the hills along the beautiful morning road toward the wonderful, glittering sea. And the harmony and significance of that radiant inner vision, in which there were deeds without strife, triumph without defeat, made him deny the girl's appeal. . . .

Meanwhile the town team was sullenly taking its place at the bat to play out the final inning of the game.

"They're well licked already, and they know it!" the girl remarked complacently. Hugh merely smiled in reply. Even in this small matter of a boy's game the note of triumph in her voice sounded hard and savage. He stroked the horse's glossy neck.

"You must be a good loser," she counselled, — another shibboleth of her class, galling to the youth!

"But I don't care a straw which side wins!"

The girl's eyes contracted before the careless contempt in his tone.

"It's just foolish," he added, well aware that this failed to express his mixed feelings.

"Foolish?"

"To care so much for a game!"

"It's like life," she retorted sagely, copying the words of her elders. "You have always got to go in for things to win."

"Win what?"

"Anything — everything worth while!" She gave him another superior look.

Hugh could not phrase his reply. He thought of other motives, — the hard push against circumstance, the steady effort, the straight furrow, the sense of power and peace that came with work well performed. Even in his little life he had had some taste of these. But that was not what the girl meant by triumph.

"You'll see when you get out into the world. Father says so. It's the men who fight hard who do things in the City, just as in games. You've got to win if you want to amount to anything."

"You've got to work, of course," he protested.

"To win," she amended.

To win *her*, at least, a man must triumph, he understood.

Their attention was caught by two small boys who had come to blows and were tumbling over their feet in a scrimmage of their own. One little chap of eight or nine was sobbing and striking out in mad, ineffective rage, while the other, with admirable self-possession and cool judgment, punched his foe in the vulnerable spots, and finally knocked him into a heap beneath the horse's head. Then the victor proceeded to kick his prostrate enemy while the other gasped and roared in anger and pain. Max looked at the two with wondering eyes.

"Here!" the girl with Hugh exclaimed, darting forward and grasping the small conqueror by his shirt collar. "You mustn't kick him like that — not when he's down."

Hugh lifted the vanquished to his feet.

"What's the matter, Joe?"

"He hit me first," the small victor shouted, struggling to escape from the girl's firm grasp. "And I'll smash in his face for him."

"All right! But with your fists, remember, you little brute," the girl admonished, laughing. "Don't snivel like

that!" she counselled the other, who was still bellowing inarticulately. "He hasn't killed you, baby."

"What's the matter, Joe?" Hugh demanded gently.

"Ah — he ain't no good — nothin' but a cry-baby!" the successful young savage jeered, confident of the girl's sympathy, in spite of her reproof. "He don't know how to fight — look at him!"

And flattered by the attention of the grown people, who at the close of the ball game were surrounding them, he made bold feints at the nose of his antagonist.

"Be still!" Hugh commanded.

"Hello, Alexandra!" the fumbling lad in glasses, who had come up with the others, called out to the girl. "What are you doing here — fight, is it?"

Hugh, unable to quiet his small boy, said to the girl, "Please take the horse," and he held out the bridle.

"Morris, take Max, will you, while I try to keep this young man-eater from chewing up the baby over there."

At the sneer, Hugh lifted his small boy from the ground, folded him in his arms, and strode away without a word. He set the little fellow down beyond the crowd, and asked gently: —

"What's the matter, Joe? What were you and Dan fighting about?"

Little Joe on his feet, hand in hand with Uncle Hugh, did not seem an altogether despicable small male, or one unable to defend himself. But instead of replying he gave another gasping sob, and Hugh forbore to press the question. They walked across the field silently until only the tear-stained face reflected the spent storm. Then Joe volunteered: —

"Dan called father names, said he didn't pay his grocer bill, and — and lots of things. I hit him!" Joe gasped at the memory of the insult.

"Never mind," Hugh replied, tightening his grip upon the small hand. "It's none of Dan's business. I'll take you fishin' next Sunday," he added, illogically, and the small Joe trudged on without another gasp. . . .

As they passed the stone mansion, Hugh perceived the girl with the horse, surrounded by the victorious team, talking to Jack Nevins. They were on their way to the Master's rooms, where they were to receive tea and cake and congratulations. The girl, at sight of Hugh, ran down the steps and held out a hand to the youth. "Thank you!" she said, with her ready smile. "Good-by," — and then, after a pause, with a touch of daring, — "I hope some day you'll win! Then you'll know what a good fight means."

Hugh reddened, and without a word hurried down the drive, the small Joe trotting by his side.

paid the store for months. I'm ashamed to send the children there any more."

Hugh nodded.

"He's gone to the City, most likely," — and her voice rose bitterly, — "with some woman! I know it."

The youth's head drooped. Fumbling in his pockets, he drew forth a crumpled bill.

"Here's something, Nell. Send Joe out for supper."

She took the money from him reluctantly, as she had taken it before in urgent need.

"It's too bad," she murmured, "taking your money."

Her own brothers had not come to her aid, and Hugh was but a youth just beginning to earn.

"Get the children some supper," he urged. "I'll be making more money soon — I must!"

And as he went to his room he regretted the idle day spent wantoning in dreams, instead of earning another much-needed dollar. Nat would let him — any one — carry his burdens, as long as he would. It was the man's nature, so obviously, so humanly delinquent in this world of duty.

But Nellie had wanted him, had plotted her girlish best to ensnare him with her bloom and her vivacity. Her father had warned her in vain against the idle "spender" from the town. She had borne three children, — one had died, — and then the woman's feeble hold on the nature of this male she had desired had loosened. Excuses, subterfuges, mean evasions, quarrels, the youth knew all the sordid story. Indeed, the delinquent's errant footsteps had been plain to him long before the wife had been willing to note them. And now in the inevitable struggle with her provider she was failing, the slack, self-indulgent woman who remembered she had once been pretty and could wheedle her male.

"If he goes on like this, I'll get a divorce," Nellie would bluster at first.

But the youth knew the outcome: return of the prodigal, storm, reproach, then acceptance, and the flare of the flickering flame of passion, sad sensuality of the coupled two! until the crest of the wave passed into the trough again. There would be more trough and less crest. Such was the law.

He must get away from it. An arrogant will to take his own possessed him.

The drone of the rector's voice came through the open window. "In my father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you." Those words which had had the magic of comfort for multitudes merely irritated the youth. He closed the window and flung himself on his unmade bed. The house smelled of disintegration. And the thought of the girl at the game came back once more. He saw the athletic field beside the river, and the meaning of the childish struggle there shone bright. Life was a game for the prizes. "The best man wins!" the girl had said, smiling with suggestion in her eyes. It was a word of truth. His heart leaped at the thought of gathering his prize in the great arena. At last the male will to prevail was roused in the youth.

His door opened, and Nellie came panting with a tray of food.

"Nell," he said, putting the food aside, "I'm going to the City!"

"When?"

"To-morrow!"

She looked at him in troubled silence, and he felt her unspoken reproach for his desertion. And the children, the Joe and Eve, whose rightful heritage of love and respect and trust had been taken from them by their ill-living parents, — he was deserting them as well. He said quickly: —

"I'll earn more money, and then I can do something for you and the children."

V

IN THE NIGHT COMES RESOLVE

HE suspected the cause in the first sob that little Joe had given, knowing well the brutality of tiny youth with youth. Small Joe's deepest feeling — his pride and his loyalty to his father — had been hurt. Hugh realized also the uselessness of spoken consolation, because he knew and the child knew and everybody in their small corner of the world knew that the facts were as the youthful Dan Stott — the grocer's son — had said in taunt. Joe's father was a poor lot, and among other failings he rarely paid a debt.

Also Hugh realized that it was futile to try to relieve the pain coming to this small organism in the social world by promise of fishing trips. The time must come — and soon — when the boy would be hardened to his lot, and worse — indifferent. But Hugh, divining the state of the child's mind, was sad at heart because of that callousing that must come to this small soul, and as he walked homewards down the dusty street he resented the attitude of the strange girl, — that "Alexandra," who had despised Joe for being a coward. Dan Stott would not have wept if Joe had reviled *his* father for selling poisonous food. He would straightway have "punched the face off" the family detractor, and the girl would have thought that admirable! Hugh clutched the small hand firmly, more than woman tender in his desire to protect the little fellow from the inevitable blows of his human destiny. . . .

"Dad home?" he asked, when they passed the prosperous

establishment of the triumphant Dan's father and turned into their street.

"No — mother's out looking for him."

As they passed the church, the cracked chimes were ringing a doleful evensong, in harmony with the gray twilight settling down upon the mill town. The church doors were open, and St. Luke's was offering its consolation to such souls as sought it. The young rector, in spotless black and white, hurrying to perform his function, nodded to Hugh with the uncertain recognition he gave to those not of his flock. The youth irritably hastened his steps and shut the noise of the bells from his soul. This was not a world of abnegation. The girl was right! The game and the small boys' fight were symbols of its eternal laws. This wide space had crept between the dawn's vision and the twilight reality. Not merely the space of trodden miles, but the space of feelings and impulses. At dawn the chimes had sounded a noble peal of great deeds and beautiful living, the colored hopes of youth. At twilight the cracked bells announced the dismal discord of fact with vision. . . .

"There's mother!" Joe exclaimed, pointing to the limp figure leaning over the picket gate. "Father can't be back yet."

The woman followed the youth into the house, and shutting the dining-room door upon the children, pointed tragically to the bare table.

"He hasn't given me any money for weeks. And now there's nothing to eat in the house."

Nellie had once been fair like May, Hugh remembered, plump and of an early bloom. Now she was sallow and somewhat gaunt, and careless, like her house. Well, as May had said, she had taken her desire when it came. . . . He waited, as was his habit, for the flood to spend itself.

"Nat didn't leave me a cent this time. And he hasn't

1

I

THE BRIDGE

HE came to the end of his journey as night was falling.

There it lay, the great City of men, beneath a soft canopy of diffused light upon the southern horizon. Long he watched the illumined heavens with greedy eyes, as the train, crying shrilly, rushed through the empty stillness of the summer night. That distant sky seemed radiant with earth-born fires, softly transfused in the upper ether to heavenly beauty. Beneath, the great City pulsed like a monstrous creature, breathing forth this phosphorescent glow upon the sky.

His heart beat quickly in unaccustomed tumult.

Nearer and nearer the creature came as the train penetrated the peopled fringe, where long lines of dotted light stretched forth to the silent country, until at last the radiance of the heavens melted into the glare of the City itself. The monster murmur of its voice filled his expectant ears. It was the City!

Time with its orderly hand touched that first blur of impressions and memories, erasing most, transforming, vivifying high points of experience, until a picture was left in large outlines, gleaming here and there with significant light, in which the trivial and the important were blended. Thus, first of all he found himself somehow upon a lofty bridge, swung by spidery threads of steel above an immense void. He was alone, yet one of a thronging multitude that tramped ceaselessly past him. Men and women in rough garments, with pale, set faces, with bent heads, — not in groups of ones and twos and threes, but in a solid mass, — flowing, flowing outwards from

the City like the tide beneath the bridge, drawn outwards to the sea. There were no human voices, no friendly glances to the stranger stemming their tide. Beneath was a void, above where the shadowy strands faded into the dark, a void; beyond, the City and behind, the City. And steadily, incessantly, here on the great causeway, this tide of human atoms,— a black tide flowing outwards! It was the tide of labor. Ebbing now, the day's work done, seeking repose, to be sucked back on the morrow into the City. Thus the City, one vast labor house, charged itself daily with human energy, and at night discharged itself along a thousand channels like this bridge. Always and always it was thus, day after day, month by month, year upon year.


In the time to come of full man's experience, when he thought of the City he would see this human tide of labor flowing silently across the great bridge, hung aloft in the void, a dark tide of men and women with white, set faces and bent heads, as though leaning against the blast of destiny that threatened to sweep them forth into the void. Drawn by the magnet of Hunger, they flowed ever thus to and from the labor house, tramping silently, the multitude of human atoms,— the legs and the arms and the bodies, the heads and the hands and the minds, of men. A Symbol, a significant sign of that city of men! The youth caught there midway in the flood beheld his arena. . . .

In those days the towered city had not risen, and yet to the youth looking over the great plain of building the stores and warehouses beneath him seemed immense, twinkling there in a maze of gaslight. From that lower point of the City where the great bridge touched he must have wandered far up the avenues, gay and peopled. He remembered the lighted windows of the shops, a petty enough show then compared with what they became, nevertheless rich in color and substance to the hungry eyes of ignorant

youth. In them were jewels and fine ornaments and clothes, rich foods and furniture and beautiful trinkets, — whatever the fancy and the appetite of man might desire. Sated with wonder, he turned from them to the people in the streets, — women handsomely dressed in rich carriages trotting forth for pleasure, the idling throng upon the pavement, the bustle about the doors of hotels, — always light and movement in the great city! And on and on in this maze of light and movement he wandered, past shops, and eating places, and theatres, enticed by the spell of the place, unmindful of time and self. Through the pageant of the city's summer night he passed, the solitary youth, with seeing eyes and open ears, until at last he had reached those quieter upper steets, about a large park where there were great dwelling-houses, removed by a space of proud reserve from the common ways, standing in dark isolation with shaded windows. Staring up at these great houses he wondered what manner of people lived behind the carefully shuttered windows.

As the night drew on and the city's voice sank to a lower key, he retraced his steps through street and avenue, emptier now, yet never wholly without life. On and on he went, and always there were buildings, always street and curb and solid wall, as if the city had spread itself over the entire earth, and peopled it with crowded beings.

Once, so the strange fancy came to him, this place of the city was silent earth, like the wind-swept fields beside the sea that he knew. Once there had been earth here, stone and soil and water, bearing green things. Now men had covered this earth with a sheet of metal and planted it with bricks and mortar, with steel and glass. They had carved it into a labyrinth of streets, and out of it great buildings shot upwards like beacons to the sky. Thus man had made his home of the silent place of God! It glittered and smoked and hissed in the night, calling loudly to the heavens,



throbbing as men throb with desires, made by men for men, — the image of their souls. The City was man! And already it was sowing its seed in the heart of the youth, this night. It was moulding him as it moulds the millions, after its fashion, warming his blood with desire, — the vast, resounding, gleaming City. . . .

It must have been well towards the dawn when his aimless wandering through the streets brought him into a quiet square. He had been drawn thither by the bright light of an immense sign, set upon the roof of a building. In mammoth letters that stretched across the breadth of the narrow roof, compact of soft fire, the message burned itself upon the night

SUCCESS

The great sign shining in the dark night from the roof drew the youth as the candle draws the moth. He moved towards it until he stood beneath the tall thin shaft of building, ten stories high, upon which the glittering sign rested. And in the light that radiated from the illumination above he read the gilt board beneath: —

THE SUCCESS CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOL


Torch above and text beneath! Gapingly the youth looked up at the gleaming sign, and his lips parted in a little smile. In his heart he knew that this sign was meant for him. Fate had led his footsteps to his text. It burned far into the night, shooting its message into all quarters, printing itself in the radiance of the heavens. This was the text of the great City, its watchword day and night, set high above in blazing letters, burning steadily, a brand to sink into the souls of men. This was the cry that he heard in the streets, that he saw in the shop windows, in the carriages and silent

houses, in the white, set faces of men and women. Success! He sat down upon the curb beneath the sign.

Some day his friend, — the bearded Anarch, — pointing derisively to the bright symbol, would say to him, "That is the one word in the language that needs no explanation. For its meaning is written in the heart of every human being, — 'life as I will it, — *my* life!'"

Now as the youth sits there on the curb he hears the hum of the presses in the basement of the new building. For unknowingly the blazing sign has led him to the door of Mr. Benjamin Gossom's flourishing establishment of popular education, and the swift presses are pouring forth thousands of his weekly leaflets, — "Gossom's Road to Success." On the morrow, still warm from the press and smelling of paper and ink, these Gossom words will be speeding to his countrymen by fast trains across the continent, up and down the states, climbing the hills, seeking tiny hamlets, dull country towns, busy little cities, spreading broadcast wherever they fall among the eighty millions their winged message. Beneath the eaves on the tenth floor, behind the broad gold sign, Gossom's clever young men and nimble stenographers have been feverishly preparing this winged message for the past week, working far into the nights to get the perfect mixture of fact and fiction, — fable, precept, and gossip. "And this," would say the great Benjamin, "is the people's education and I make it!" . . .

The youth sat there at the feet of the fiery symbol and mused, as if aware in his unsophisticated mind that he had reached the heart of the City, that his journey of wonder and question ended here. Suddenly above the purr of the presses in the basement of Gossom's building a shrill cry rang out in the night, a woman's shriek of agony. The youth quivered with the stab of that shriek, his eyes searching the dark street.



And then gradually the shrieks subsided, settling into one long, sobbing moan, — "No — I — won't — let 'em — cut — it — off! No — no —" Then there was a strange silence in the room, as horrid as the cries, while the men swiftly placed the limp figure on the stretcher and prepared to carry her to the ambulance.

He remembered the silence in the room while the men stepped heavily down the stairs with their burden, then the rush to the windows to watch the white object on the stretcher shoved into the waiting cart. He wondered whither they were bearing her in the vast city. The gong sounded, the ambulance moved away, and almost at the same moment the belts in the loft began whirring, drowning the chatter of the girls. The shop boss pushed the girls back to the benches, while the bearded man talked with the policeman, who was making notes in a little book. The whirring belts suddenly took hold of the gears, the iron arms set with their glistening steel teeth slowly lifted, then descended, rose again and darted down into the soft white masses of cloth, eating their way like streaks of glittering light through the white fabric. The heads of the girls were bent, their eyes fixed upon those streaks of light, their tense fingers guiding the cloth swiftly as the needles flashed through it.

The youth must have lingered, fascinated by the scene, — that row of bent heads above the flashing needles, the tense gaze of the girls upon those fiery points between their fingers. The lumpish girl was chewing nervously at a mouthful of gum, steering her mass of fluffy stuff, dead to the world.

"Say! What are you doing here?" the perspiring little boss demanded, touching the youth upon the shoulder. And with a scowl, elbowing him towards the door, he growled, "Get out of this — quick. We've had enough trouble for one night!"

He found himself in the street beside the bearded man.

The stranger had a sympathetic, disengaged air as he looked at the youth, which invited speech.

"What have they done with her?—What does it all mean?" Hugh asked, breathless, feeling that he was in some sort of nightmare. The bearded stranger's lips opened in a slow smile. He seemed to comprehend the youth's bewildered state of mind.

"Taken her to the hospital," he replied. "It's just an accident. The officer tells me there's one in this shop on an average twice a month. You see," he continued in a leisurely, explanatory tone, "those new electric sewing-machines are deadly things! The old machines had one needle, and it made only about ten strokes a second. But these new electric ones carry a bunch of five needles, and they are geared to run forty strokes to the second. The needle has become a mere streak of light to the eye of the operator. The least lapse of attention results — like this!"

"But why do they let young girls handle such terrible machines?" Hugh demanded.

The stranger smiled good-naturedly. He seemed to have a placid philosophical interest in making this matter quite plain to the youth.

"Because it's cheaper, because girls are quicker, and when they are caught, like that one, the cost is less. One of those machines can do ten times the work of the old sewing-machine. Hence increased efficiency, increased profits. It's the business law, my boy! That's life in the City — gearing up, always gearing up."

And as the youth pondered this simple truth, he added, —

"The trouble is that the brain of the girl operator has not been geared up fast enough to meet the demand of the new machine. The increased number of revolutions in those gears requires an increased number of brain reactions. The operator, too, must work at higher tension."

Hugh nodded, and the bearded one, linking his arm in the youth's, strolled towards the street corner, still talking.

"But the brains of those girls are of a very primitive order."

"Why do they take such dangerous work?"

The stranger made an expressive gesture with his hand and his mouth.

"You are new to the City!" he observed, and continued his line of thought. "That girl whose hand was sewed up could not have been much over fifteen. She had been working at the machines less than a month. A girl of that age should not be allowed to run a power machine, which makes over five hundred strokes a minute. Moreover, the machine should be properly protected, but that would cost more. Her little brain should be geared up gradually to such intensive labor. And this night work, demanding an extra drain upon the nerve cells, and the sudden heat wave have made them all languid — so the girl's eyes wandered. Perhaps she was thinking of her fellow, or of the thirty cents extra for this night work — who knows? But that errant thought has caused the loss of her capital, — her right hand, — probably. The doctor told me there was not much chance of saving it. And this loss of her sole capital will force her to change her class: she will have to enter another profession in the struggle for existence."

The youth tried to comprehend these mysteries, and stammered: —

"That's why she cried out that way?"

"Not to cut off her hand?" the stranger replied, with a slow smile. "Don't you understand?" and as the youth looked puzzled, he pointed to a woman lingering under a gaslight at the corner of the street, peering doubtfully at them, then glancing away to the more frequented avenue, as if awaiting some one. "You know HER!"

III

THE SYMBOL

THE woman slowly started off up the lighted avenue, looking this way and that, in search of one who did not come. The stranger nodded towards her retreating form.

"Understand now? That woman over there belongs to the universal and eternal profession, the woman's profession that was before competitive society existed, and will be long after it has dissolved into something else. For it is the only stable profession, open at all times and to pretty nearly every woman born."

The youth began to understand, and blushed. For the little mill town had not been free from members of this universal profession, although they had been hidden away in alleys and ignored. The meaning of that pitiful cry now began to dawn in his mind.

"When those needles bit like fire into that girl's hand, the first idea that coursed through her small brain, stimulated by the horrible pain, was that her moment of errant attention might cost her the so-called respectable livelihood that she enjoyed. And that, bread and shelter and clothes being otherwise unprocurable, she must become — a whore!"

The bearded stranger brought out the opprobrious word with a tranquil emphasis that made the youth start. They had reached a small park, in the rear of the Gossom building, about which rose large, old houses of an ancient affluence. The stranger, leaning against the iron palings of the park, hunted for a pipe, filled it, and putting his hand again

beneath the youth's arm, resumed his strolling pace around the square, smoking and talking.

"Now her brain, elementary as it is, performed that feat of imagination with lightning rapidity. So her one thought was to save her capital, — her means of an honest livelihood — you understand?"

"But the proprietor will do something for her," Hugh urged.

"He'll give her twenty-five dollars for a complete discharge of his liability. He's not a rich man. You should see him when he goes to his bank! He himself is likely enough to be chewed up some of these days by a stronger competitor. . . . The twenty-five dollars will see the girl through her illness. And then —" he completed the thought with a quiet gesture. "An ignorant one-armed girl of sixteen has not much chance in the fight."

"Horrible!" the youth murmured, his arm trembling in the stranger's grasp.

"But commonplace. You must get used to the sordid details of our glorious civilization! And we must not sentimentalize. What would have happened, if she had escaped this accident? And escaped also any irregular entanglement with some amorous male? She would have married that fellow of hers, and spent herself bringing children into the world in some back room over there." He pointed down the street to a row of tall brick buildings. "Six or eight or a dozen in a couple of rooms! No, the girl was brought into this world by accident, product of easy times and high wages. She answered the demand for labor. And so from the moment she was conceived, she was destined to feed the labor machine in one way or another. Her very being in this world of ours is due to the opportunity for exploiting her."

The youth listened with bewildered eyes, trying to comprehend a strange, new language.

"They are bred like cattle," the stranger said harshly, "and worked for all there is in them, with less care than cattle get!"


This the youth could understand.

"Most of the girls enter the ancient profession because it's the easiest solution, better than the grind of shop or mill. But this one in the shirt factory seemed rather fresh, as if she still had that singularly tenacious aversion to sex promiscuity that the normal female of our civilization preserves — a German Jew, I should say. Maybe she has some ideal of monogamy, — a desire for sentiment and conventional satisfaction of the sex instinct."

The youth instinctively drew apart from the bearded stranger, disliking the cold tone with which this singular man discussed the tenderest secrets of humanity. The mood of irony was unintelligible to the country lad, and this slouchy figure, wrapped in an old cloak, smoking a foul pipe and discoursing on street corners of the mysteries, seemed another marvellous manifestation of the great City. . . .

Their loitering pace finally brought them to one of those lofty mansions on the other side of the square, of which the door was unlocked. The stranger, not relinquishing his grip upon Hugh, entered and guided his companion up the narrow stairs. Dim gaslights showed the lofty ceilings and heavy cornices of what once must have been a rich man's house. It was old and shabby and dirty now, like its neighbors in this quarter, hesitating between a decline into the undisguised slum of the east and the commercialized respectability of the west. While it lingered in the borderland between trade and tenement, it housed such uncertain persons as the bearded man.

At the very top of the house the stranger unlocked a door, and with a wave of his hand ushered the youth into a large attic chamber. The dormer windows on the south were exposed to the full blast of the electric sign, — SUCCESS, — which filled the room with a tolerable light from its beams.



"Yonder," said the man, "is the light by which I live. Behold!" He pointed to the great sign. "Like the lamp of God, luckily it shines upon the successful and the unsuccessful alike!"

From a closet he brought some food and a bottle of liquor, which he placed upon the sole table in the room. Pouring himself a glass of the drink, he raised it to his smiling lips and nodded towards the sign. Hugh ate some bread and watched his host, who, having emptied the glass, began again to talk.

"I believe you were gazing at yonder beacon when the little tragedy across the way distracted your attention?"

Hugh nodded.

"Another moth to the flame — fresh from the country? They come by the thousands!" He poured himself more whiskey, and sipping it reflectively continued, "You have not yet connected in your mind the two — that sign yonder and the girl with the maimed hand. They are, nevertheless, closely bound together, one of an infinite number of petty knots — cause and effect — in this tangled world of ours."

From a litter of papers and books beneath the table he extracted one of Gossom's leaflets. The gaudily illuminated cover bore in torch-like letters of gold the words *The Road to Success*.

"Ever seen the thing? The gospel of unrest! How to beat the game! Will make you Plumber or Bank President for ten dollars and twenty lessons. And here!" He delved again and brought forth a thick magazine adorned with the picture of a highly colored female.

He thumbed the pages until he came to a cut in the advertising section, and then handed the magazine to the youth. The full-page cut represented an attractive young woman adorned in some fluffy article of underwear. To the youth's puzzled look he remarked mockingly: —

"It's an article that once was made in the privacy of the

home. Now, in response to the demand created by such attractive pictures as this, it is manufactured by hundreds of thousands in shops such as you have seen by machines like those that sewed up the girl's hand. That mass of wood pulp and printer's ink which you hold in your hand is one of the efficient processes in the modern system of creating thirst for things in order that they may be made and sold for a profit to some one. That big building" — he pointed to the Gos-som establishment — "is a thirst provoker — its business is to create desires!"

And thereupon the bearded one entered upon a highly picturesque account of the complex psychology of this world which related Mr. Gos-som's "beneficent institution" (his fond description of the Success School) with the fate of the little girl at the sewing-machine in the loft. The youth, propping his head on his hands, facing the lambent sign which seemed at times to wink at him over the bearded one's shoulders, listened, absorbed, not wholly comprehending the marvellous flow of fact and fancy, lit with bitter irony, pointed with brutal fact. (In his memories of that first encounter with the bearded stranger, doubtless much else from different occasions of later intercourse became involved, for it was impossible that the waning hours of his first night could have held the whole of what he seemed to remember. . . .)

It was an extraordinary view of things, — to the simple youth an altogether bedlam account of the world and of man, — but presented, with the aid of more whiskey, with a finish of illustration, an aptness which even that orthodox soul, President Nathaniel Butterfield of the great City University, at one time lecturer upon social problems, must have admired, although deploring the insidious fallacies of an argument totally subversive of the glories of THINGS AS THEY ARE, in which President Butterfield had ample cause for firm belief.

Surely portly little Benjamin Gossom, sitting in his mahogany sanctum beneath his electric aegis, would have blushed with amazement and anger at this "anarchistic" analysis of his very being! For Mr. Gossom was the incarnate spirit of advertising. Why, the simplest schoolboy knew that civilization had reached its present splendid level in these broad United States chiefly by the development of the advertising spirit. He, Benjamin Gossom, was accustomed to look upon himself as an agent of the Lord in the work of sowing broadcast the wealth of this His earth by enticing His children to desire whatsoever material things they did not possess. What idiot's raving was this bearded fool uttering in that bare attic hole!

Our youth, leaning upon the wooden table in this same attic room, his brows knit in puzzled thought, his eyes wandering from the stranger's lips to the huge sign across the alley, was trying vainly to grasp the meaning of it all. From the flood of words—the panoramic view of Life To-day—he began dimly to perceive a strange new light. And in this light he saw afresh those faces upon the City street, heard again the dull music of the marching multitude upon the bridge, fleeing from their labor house, beheld more clearly the whirring machines in the loft, with their bright streaks of light where the needles flashed. His fingers turned mechanically the thick pages of the magazine, which revealed a dazzling procession of cuts, representing engines, clothes, foods, guns, corsets, jewelry, — truly a catalogue of human desires.

"Modern industry is concerned mostly with satisfying useless or harmful wants," the bearded one was saying. "Study that wood-pulp mass with care: it will give you your best lessons in what life is to-day, — at this moment of the world's history!"

Desires! In his troubled brain there was dawning faintly the light of a great thought. This vast labor house of life was set

in motion by *desire*. What kind of desire? His eyes went back to Mr. Gossom's illumined Symbol.

The work of the world to which he had come to take his part, to get his reward, seemed like the whirring revolution of a titanic machine, grinding, shaping, and out from its hopper dropped — the figure of a little girl with a bloody hand. . . .

Meantime the City's voice had almost utterly died out. The lights in the houses all about had gone out long since, but the blazing Symbol neither flickered nor flared, casting steadily its message over City roofs, a torch in the sky to men.

SUCCESS

The bearded Anarch leaning out of the window knocked the ashes from his last pipe against the bricks and nodded ironical greeting to the Symbol.

"Oh, mighty magnet! It drew me hither to this attic chamber. It drew you from afar into the City."

"Yes," sighed the weary youth, "that's what I came for!"

"And you will give up your life to it. It draws its millions and its tens of millions into the clutch of the great machine. . . . Well, this first night you shall sleep bathed in its beneficent beams."

He drew a lounge to the window for his guest, and flinging himself on his bed in the corner was soon asleep. The youth, gazing into the large yellow eyes of the sign, thought that on the morrow he must surely find his job.

Then he fell asleep.

IV

ONE NAME AMONG THE MILLIONS

THE next morning when the youth awoke, warm yellow sunshine was flooding the attic room instead of the beams from the great sign. That was black and lustreless, and the huge scantling on which the letters were formed cut the blue sky like a web of revealed magic. From the streets below rose the roar of traffic; the day's business was well begun in the City. For a few moments he lay there, trying to piece together some reality out of the confused images of the night, then rose and hastily dressed himself. His host's bed was empty, and on the table he found a pencilled scrawl, — "Come back when you will." It was signed "Wethered." Still numb with the experience of his first immersion in the great City, he descended to the street. But once his feet had touched the pavement, already hot with the morning sun, and his ears were filled with the resounding voice of the City, he straightway forgot the bearded stranger and his fantastic fable of Success. There awoke anew within him the insistent purpose that had led him thither — to find his way into the great arena.

One name alone among all the millions in the City was known to the youth, — a name that had become familiar in the Grant family from the old man's lips, the name of Alexander Arnold. The story was as simple as that other family epic of the finding of the foundling, and in the words of old Grant was this: —

"After the War I was as poor as most of the boys, with just my horse and a claim, along with some others, to a tract

of land in the mountains. I rode the horse across the states to that land, and it was nothing but a sort of lonesome wilderness. So I went back home and thought nothing more about the land until one day some years after a feller came to me from this man Arnold, and said if I could get the others to sell me their share Arnold would give me ten thousand dollars for the land. The others were women and knew nothing 'bout the property. I went to the City and saw this Arnold, and he was a mighty bright man. "'Tain't worth anything to them,' I said to him, 'more'n it is to me.' 'You get 'em to sell,' he said, 'and there's five thousand in it for you!' 'No,' I said, 'that ain't the way I do business. Whatever the land is worth, they share same as me.' He laughed and said, 'You're an honest man, Grant! Fix it to suit yourself.' So when he came to pay for the land, he says again, 'You're an honest man, Grant! And if you ever want help here in the City, you come and see me.'"

So when it had been question of the foundling's setting forth in search of fortune, the old man had repeated, "Go and see that Alexander Arnold. Tell him I sent you—David Grant, the man who sold him the land in the mountains."

Arnold lived, so the youth learned, far to the north, and this warm summer morning he started in search of the great one. He did not know that in the years which had passed since the simple old surveyor had had his dealings with the young speculator, Arnold had made a great name in the City, a name to conjure with, which already reached far beyond the City limits out over the broad country. It was becoming rapidly a symbol of Power and Control in the land; his hand was in many enterprises that touched the lives of millions.

And this was the one name of all the people in the great City that the youth knew!

He set out on his quest with light heart, his roving eyes absorbing the spectacle of the awakened city. Already, for

many hours, the heavy drays had been thudding through the streets, but now the cry of human traffic was at its height and all was in motion throughout the City. The tide of labor had rolled back across the great bridge, and from many avenues men and women were pouring into the City for their labor. Each was intent upon his affair, pursuing his purpose, and the youth, remembering the words of the bearded stranger, smiled to himself. In the summer morning, the terrible problem of the night seemed evident and simple. 'Get to work!' the City shouted from its lusty lungs. 'Get to work!' the set faces of the hurrying multitude said. Insensibly his feet had caught the impatient rhythm of the street, and the excitement had touched his nerves. Work, his work, that was all his eager heart was fixed upon. Already, before he had lived a day, the great City was claiming him for its own.

So he hastened on, impatient, threading through busy streets, up crowded avenues, casting hasty glances at the spidery structures of steel rising with the noisy tap of metal mallets, the hissing of steam, passing great caverns of rock where men were digging into the earth for their foundations. All was in bustling turmoil, out of which somehow emerged a harmonious note, — "Work! Work! achievement, accomplishment, life!" And he hurried on.

Far up the City opposite that green space of park where he had rested the night before, he found the home of Alexander Arnold, — one of those tall, proud houses removed by a narrow strip of precious earth from the street pavement. With a glance at the large stone face, the carving about the windows, he strode up the broad stone steps to knock at the gate of his fortune. It was a massive door barred with metal, with a tiny window of glass, behind which was the face of a servant, smooth and impassive. . . .

The youth never knew how accident befriended him in the execution of his simple plan. For while the servant at the

door was about to turn him away, as he turned away many who came thither in search of his master on errands that would seem trivial to the busy man, the inner door opened and the master of the house himself appeared, followed by his secretary and another servant. The youth confronted Alexander Arnold before his door, and the glance that the older man gave the younger one from beneath his bushy gray brows was the most searching human examination that Hugh Grant had ever suffered. It was compact of cunning and suspicion and knowledge of men — the distilled wisdom of a ripe age. For at this time Arnold's thick hair was already becoming white and his face was deeply lined, though the carriage of his small body was firm and vigorous, and the alert glance and the aggressive step bespoke complete power of manhood. The servant had already edged himself between his master and the intruder when the youth, seizing quickly the slipping opportunity, spoke:—

"Are you Mr. Alexander Arnold?"

"Well?" the rough voice replied with a questioning inflection. It was the curt tone of one who admitted nothing in dealing with his fellow-men.

"I am Hugh Grant —"

The great man was already passing him on the step.

"You knew my father, David Grant —"

The man wheeled.

"Grant?" he queried, with knitted brows, and again the servant interposed, saying pertly, "If you have any business, you must write."

But Hugh continued tranquilly, with perfect self-possession, "David Grant — he sold you some land once."

Into the older man's eyes there flashed recollection. "Well," he said, indifferently, "what do you want?" as though he knew all men only through their demands. While Hugh hesitated, at a loss for the best word, the door behind them opened again, and a servant came running forth with a message

for Arnold. Turning brusquely, he signed to the youth to follow him, saying, "Wait!"

Grudgingly the servant held open that massive door, and the youth entered, following the old man through the marble vestibule into the lofty, spacious hall within. There the master of the house motioned him to stay, and disappeared. The servant standing beside the outer door gazed impassively over his head. It was a large, dim place in which the youth found himself, lighted in some disguised manner from above. Slowly he began to distinguish objects in the subdued atmosphere, — many wonderful and unfamiliar things, — rugs and tapestries and pictures, heavy tables and gilded cabinets, furniture of rare woods and of metal carved and adorned in skilful manner. From where he stood he could see other rooms beyond, making a long vista, and all filled with rich and precious objects.

In this spacious house it was neither hot nor cold, neither light nor dark, and it was silent. The luxury of the place penetrated the ignorant youth like a fragrant perfume. He knew it not, but the spirit expressed in this great house of the modern City lord was of the ancient tradition of Cleopatra or of the grand Louis. It was the same spirit that once breathed in the silent depths of a Babylonian palace, in the house of the Cæsar upon the Palatine, in the villas of the Renaissance. The pictures upon the walls, the inlaid cabinets, the old rugs, the precious trinkets, had been brought hither from many lands of the four quarters of the earth, and were the work of different peoples and ages. But the spirit which they created was the same — that spirit that always remains the same, passing from age to age, from place to place, appearing wherever man is acquisitive and triumphant and seeks his joy in the beauty and the splendor of possessions. The elements in it vary with the whim of taste, but the imperial result achieved is always the same.

First of all, space and silence. Here the harsh cry of living men is shut out, their squalid doings and necessities, for within a deep calm is shrined in space. Next beauty and the pride of exclusive possession, — rich vessels, antique ornaments of color and form, rare and precious stone and metal, whatever embodies costly material and the skilful labor of many hands, — that is the basic stuff of luxury. And last of all the unseen spirit — the spirit of selection and self-expression and self-enjoyment through the possession of things that are costly and enviable. . . .

The youth casting about this house inquiring eyes did not feel strange to the place. He understood. The language was new, but it spoke powerfully to him. In that hall of the rich man's home, new appetites awoke within him; imagination leaped at the stimulus to his senses. This was the secret of the great Symbol in whose beams of light he had slept. "Alexander Arnold was a clever fellow — he's become rich," so old Grant had said again and again. And this was what Success meant, in exact terms! Some day he would understand yet more, — would perceive the invisible threads of circumstance linking that black tide of labor upon the great bridge with the rich magnificence about him. But now he saw merely the outer garment of success. . . .

"Father!" The silence was broken by a girl's voice coming from some room within, — a voice low, melodious, perfectly cadenced like the silvery tone of a bell. It made the youth's pulses beat faster, and he waited with alert ears. The harsher voice of Arnold, rough with male quality and the dust of the streets, answered. Again came the murmur of the woman's voice, low and laughing, serene and melodious. It was the voice of the place itself, subtly chiming the spirit of the house, and the laughing, melodious tone roused a vague desire in the youth, as the precious objects surrounding him had roused the instinct for possession. He looked eagerly

into the dim vista of rooms, in hope that the speaker would appear. But all that he was to know of this new wonder was that silvery tone. Presently the master of the house entered the hall, and seeing the youth where he had left him, recollected him with a frown and motioned him to follow.

"Well — what is it you want?"

The youth looked into the deep brown eyes of Arnold, then over his head into the depths of splendor behind, and he said simply: —

"Some place in the City to work — a chance!"

"Old Grant sent you to me, did he?"

"Yours was the only name he knew in the City."

"Your father was an honest man," Arnold remarked meditatively, a slight, cold smile wrinkling his lips. Hugh made no reply, although it was on his tongue to explain that the old surveyor was not his father in blood. But already the City had taught him to calculate the effect of every little thing, and he felt that the great man's will to serve him might be less were he to know that he dealt with a foundling. And Arnold was saying already: —

"Your father had some business with me once — he was an honest man."

He repeated the words softly, the smile deepening, as if an old memory had been awakened. Hugh wondered that he should make so much of this fact. To be honest was scarcely a notable virtue, as David Grant had taught him.

"He always said that you were satisfied with the business you did with him."

"Satisfied — yes, I was well satisfied," Arnold replied slowly. "How is your father?"

"Dead."

"So! and he left little, I suppose?"

"Nothing."

Arnold looked away into the avenue and was silent.

"So you have come to the City to find your chance?" he asked at last.

"Yes!"

"The City is a good place if you have got anything in you. What can you do?"

There was an icy stress on the last word, which said to Hugh that the world wherein this man moved was a world of power, and whoever would enter it must offer deeds, not words, for his credential.

"I have worked a little in a bank."

"In a bank? Good. That is where I am going now."

And Hugh felt that another revolution in the wheel of his fate had begun to turn. It was the same avenue which they descended swiftly in Arnold's carriage that he had followed a short time before, but he looked upon its thronged scene with new eyes, the eager eyes of coming opportunity. . . .

One more speech, he remembered, the taciturn man by his side uttered that memorable first meeting. As the carriage slowed in the press of traffic in the crowded lower quarter of the City, Arnold turned to him abruptly: —

"You said your father died poor?"

"Yes."

"He might have made a fortune."

"He did not care for money."

The contemptuous glance from the brown eyes discomfited the youth so that he withdrew into his corner of the carriage.

"Never knew a man who didn't — if he could get it!"

Thereafter Alexander Arnold was silent. The youth felt for him that repulsion which the great man inspired even among his associates, rich and powerful men like himself. It was a feeling partly of fear before a relentless will and an intelligence unsoftened by any discoverable emotion. He

began to wonder at his own audacity in approaching this cold man of power and asking something of him for nothing!

In one of the narrow walled cañons of the lower City the carriage stopped before a grimy building on whose lower windows was painted in broad gilt letters, — **THE BANK OF THE REPUBLIC**. Arnold descended from his carriage, and with a grunt invited the youth to follow him. As Hugh entered the lofty banking-room with its worn marble floors and severe wooden screen, he had a strange thrill. This, he felt, was to be that point of vantage for him in the vast arena to which he had come. The Bank of the Republic, then in its beginning, but already known and feared throughout the great City as the instrument, the weapon, of Arnold and his allies, — “the Republic crowd,” as they were commonly called, — would be to him more than home and friends. The Bank was to become almost a human creature, an actor in the tale of his life, growing and changing, as he grew and changed, absorbing weaker rivals, dominating, — shifting itself from this cramped corner of an office building to that wonderful temple of marble and bronze erected in the heart of the City by its able president as a monument to himself.

At this time, at least on the surface, it was merely a bank like another, thronged at this hour by busy men waiting before the little windows to transact their affairs. Behind these windows worked deft clerks among the piles of notes and gold and papers. Arnold stalked through the crowded room, with neither glance nor word of greeting, though many observed him curiously, and the clerks fingering money looked up to see him pass. The youth, noting all, realized again the sensation of power which this man radiated.

At the door of the inner office, which his guide pushed open brusquely, Hugh waited, while the great man, nodding curtly to the group gathered about a table, took a proffered chair at their head. At once the conference in which these

men were engaged was resumed, and Hugh, sinking into the chair by the door, forgotten and ignored, was free to watch and listen. There was nothing of special mark about the men grouped around that table in the office of the bank president, nothing in their neat dress, their subdued tones, and indifferent behavior to indicate their importance. Nevertheless, the youth knew by some swift instinct that he was in the presence of Power, just as before in the rich man's house he had felt the spirit of Beauty and Luxury. His senses, stimulated here as they had been there, told him that the connection was close and sure between this Power and those Possessions!

He never forgot the faces of those men gathered this fine June morning in the private room at the bank, and the time came when he knew most of them personally and knew what each one meant in the life of his day. The handsome youngish man, who had risen on Arnold's entrance and greeted the great one deferentially, as a master, was Oliver Whiting — the youngest bank president in the City. Some called him "Arnold's man," but it was in other terms that President Butterfield unctuously described the banker when the university bestowed upon him — then a cabinet officer — the dignity of its honorary degree. "Banker, statesman, philanthropist, public-spirited citizen," the university president would say! The man at his right, the dapper little fellow with glossy black hair and ferret eyes, with a flower in his buttonhole, was none other than Michael Peter Ravi, then just emerging from that black obscurity that no keen reporter was ever able fully to penetrate. Already he had his hand upon the great Atlantic and Pacific Railroad. Beside Arnold sat another man of mark, Thomas Talbot, — the legal hand of power. His also was a smooth-shaven face, broad and massive, with fine brow beneath gray curling hair, and sensitive lips. Scholar and writer, he might have been on the bench or in the university, in other days, but

he had taken the worn path in an age when all the talents are plainly ticketed with the price mark of success. Next to Arnold he was the ablest of these men, and he knew it.

These gentlemen discussed their affairs in low tones, with no gestures, and many pauses that spoke louder than words. What they said mattered little to the listening youth. He was ignorant of the terms, — stocks, bonds, credit, panic, receivership, reorganization. What mattered it to him! he was not even aware of the troublous times in the country, — the lethargic state of business. It might well have been some petty affairs of banking business, traffic in money. Instead it was the far-reaching plan, the stealthy stretching forth of the hand of power at the moment of opportunity to grasp that which it coveted. A great railroad property, with its thousands of laborers, its many owners, was the prize for their sleight of hand. "Credit, reorganization, receivership," — they were the dull names of the modern powder and shot and shell. The youth, wide-eyed, listened and wondered. Some day that great property, the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad, would be legally transferred from certain weak owners to these strong men, and Michael Peter would be chosen satrap to govern their new possession. Another game than that played on the green beside the river, with its own secret plays, and intricate rules, but with the same end, always the same! . . .

At last the meeting broke up, and the men with brief salutations went their ways about other affairs. Arnold stayed to speak with the banker, and Hugh, still sitting beside the door, believed himself forgotten and was about to creep away. But the great man, turning and perceiving him, said to the banker: —

"Can you find something for this young man to do in the bank, Mr. Whiting? He wants to become a financier!" And then, with the same dry smile, he added, "I once

had some dealings with his father. He was a perfectly honest man."

Without further word or greeting to the youth, Arnold departed, and the banker, scarcely looking at Hugh, touched a bell, and to the clerk who responded said, "Take him to Mr. Venable."

Thus, like a parcel, the youth was transferred to a little wire cage where a middle-aged man was seated before a mass of commercial papers. After a time he glanced up at the figure standing before him, and Hugh was aware of the pleasant blue eyes with a kindly humor in them and the sympathetic curve of the large mouth.

"Ever seen a bank before, my son?" Mr. Venable inquired.

Waiving all reply, he rose and conducted him by a little iron ladder to a narrow gallery that circled above the general banking-room. Here in a few feet of space, elbowed by bustling clerks, sorting thick bundles of papers, he began the business of life in the Bank of the Republic.

He was twenty years of age.

V

THE LAW OF LIFE

At night the youth drifted back to the attic room opposite the golden sign. It was the one familiar spot in the whole City. To his knock a hearty voice called, "Come in!"

On the bed lay sprawled the large figure of the bearded man, his felt hat crushed beneath his head. There were three other men in the room, seated about the wooden table in attitudes of heated argument. At Hugh's entrance they became silent until the host waved his hand, motioning the newcomer to a seat beside the window. A short, thick-set man, with a strong black mustache and a number of gold teeth, which protruded when he talked, tilted back in his chair, one fist resting on the table. He said slowly: —

"What the hell is the use of jawing here all night? You can take it or leave it!"

He spoke directly to a thin man with nervous, wrinkled face, sparsely covered by a sandy beard.

"We'll get out an injunction!"

"Try it," the thick-set fellow replied, with an ugly sneer. "The men will not go back until you settle."

The nervous man rose and brought his fist down on the table, in strong affirmation. At this point the third man, younger than the other two, and more fashionably dressed, who had been listening intently, stroking his fine mustache with the handle of a little cane, laid a hand on the nervous one's shoulder and drew him aside for a whispered conference. The thin man shrugged his shoulders and shook his head, then half angrily exclaimed: —

"How do we know he'll stay bought when he gets the money?"

At this the thick-set man winked at the host, and the latter smiled, a curious smile, the youth thought.

"You can give the stuff to Mr. Wethered here," the thick-set one suggested. But their host shook his head.

"It would be better to put it in the bank," the younger one proposed, and then they discussed the details of disposing of some large sum of money which was contingently to be paid to the thick-set man on the performance of an agreement mysterious to the youth. Finally it was arranged that the dollars in question should be lodged in the Bank of the Republic for a stated period, and the nervous one, grasping his hat, started for the door. Before leaving he turned and, addressing the thick-set fellow, who was complacently smiling, exclaimed with anger:—


"You dirty rascal!" and nodding at Wethered, he added, "and you are his partner!"

"Oh," replied the other, still smiling, "as for names—what are you?"

The thin man threw open the door and banged it to behind him.

"I had him there, the damned hypocrite!" the thick-set man remarked, lighting a large cigar. "He'll keep his talky mouth shut after this. He's a stiff one, but he came up to time." Finding no response, he too took his hat and prepared to go, saying to Wethered, "If you ever want any little job in my line, come and see me." With another broad smile he left, and then the third man, who had been staring out of the window abstractedly all the time, remarked hastily:—

"Tremendously obliged to you, I'm sure! It was hard work getting the old man here, and I thought it was all over when Wright put the price up. You see, he's fought Wright's



methods for years, but he was caught — you understand? They got after him at the bank; he was too heavily loaded."

Wethered nodded.

"Do you think Wright will stay bought this time?"

"Yes!"

"Well, it means a lot to me!" the young man said in easy confidence. "I don't know where I should have been if we had failed."

"Now you'll be able to marry the girl?" scoffed the big bearded man, "and get that little country house you've been looking at."

"Oh, it straightens things. . . . Well, I must be going. Awfully obliged, old man!" He pulled on a pair of light gloves, paused, and looked meaningly at Hugh. "It mustn't get out, eh?"

"He can't understand — even if he wanted to tell!" said the host. With another farewell the young man hastened away, and his tripping steps might be heard far down the uncarpeted stairs.

Wethered leapt to his feet and laughed loudly. At the moment a flood of light burst into the room from the illuminated sign.

"My friend Ellgood should have stayed a moment longer to shine in the glory of the torch. He is a faithful disciple of friend Gossom!"

"What does it mean?" asked Hugh, with puzzled face.

"The little affair you have just witnessed? A comedy, a tragedy, — what the law calls 'compounding a felony.' That fellow who got the money ordered a strike on the big building you have seen at the corner below. He was paid to do it by the business rivals of the gentleman who left first — the thin, nervous man. The bank was pressing him, too; and in order to save himself, he has just consented to a crime — **paid Luke Wright twice what the others gave him in order**

that he may be permitted to complete his contract and get his money. My young friend is an architect, Ellgood, who brought them together, or rather got me to find Wright. He wants his money, too, for he has his ambitions, and for them he too needs money, much money!"

"But —" the youth stammered.

"I have been party to a crime. That doesn't trouble me. There is no villain to the piece, or all are villains, as you look at it. That fellow Luke Wright was a good carpenter once, an honest man, but he found a way to make better wages than three dollars a day. The employers bought him. And the contractor, who has just bought his right to do business from the blackguard, got his start by cheating the City on contracts. As for Ellgood, poor man, he has always been poor, and he wants to marry — besides, he's one of Gossom's pupils. He means to 'arrive,' as he calls it."

"But," said Hugh, "is there no law?"

"My boy, there is the policeman — be careful you don't take five dollars from your boss or get drunk!"

"And you?" Hugh ventured. Wethered smiled.

"Have you seen the line of hungry men down there in the square? Times are hard, and building is scarce. Tomorrow when you go down the street, you will see the men at work up aloft in the steel cage. Well, isn't that worth a little crime?"

The bewildered youth was silent, thinking his simple thoughts about a world where two wrongs apparently made the only obtainable right. Meanwhile the bearded one started preparations for supper, talking cheerily as he brewed the coffee and cut the meat.

"So you came back to roost? Good. Stay with me, and I will show you a slice of the universe, my boy."

And turning to the window, knife in hand, demonstrating

with it upon the open horizon, "See!" he exclaimed, "the four quarters of the world! The tops of those high buildings mark the bank quarter, where the engine is stoked. There is friend Gossom's establishment just opposite, and beneath is the loft where the sewing girls labor. Two poles of the universal magnet! Now look farther to the right; the gray stone building back to back with the Success School. That is the home of the City Good Deeds Society. It's a quiet, solid, proper sort of place. The GOOD WILL of the community has its business offices in there, and they make the poultice for the social sores. Any winter day you can see half-clothed men and women slink in and out of those doors with shamefaced air. That busy place helps more of our kindly people to sleep well o' nights than the police station. They think that 'somebody is doing something' for their unfortunate neighbors, and they can turn comfortably in their beds and forget them. . . . There! Turn your nose this way, and you will smell the pleasant odor from the sweet factory on the next block. A whole acre of confectionery, one of our most flourishing minor industries. And by the way, that's where the shirt-maker gets that glucose compound he serves out in fancy boxes at the end of the week to the girls that have kept up the pace. The hope of those few dozens of adulterated sweets will keep the little fingers moving more nimbly for sixty long hours. Think of that! The great principle of stimulus. . . . And the candy factory is another sort of sweet shop, too. Some of the men in Ellgood's club on the square over there have discovered that more than one kind of sweet is housed beneath its ample roof. . . . Behind us is the tenement district, where the workers are packed in, block after block, five, ten, to the room. Here we sit, on the marge, betwixt those who have profited from the lesson of Gossom's sign and those who will never profit from anything. Stay with me, lad, and use

your eyes and ears. You will get free many a lesson in the great experience!"

He waved Hugh to the table where supper was prepared.

"And what is the great experience?" Hugh asked.

"Life! . . . I take it you have begun yours to-day. What luck for you in the great City?"

Hugh stated the simple result of the day — his job in the Bank of the Republic.

"Found your place so quickly?" the bearded one commented jocularly. "And chosen Finance for your career? Good! It is the most promising ladder these days if you have nimble feet. Do you see yourself in the president's room or sitting behind a pile of currency at the cashier's desk?"

"I've got a job, that's all." To tell the truth, he had been thinking in his few idle moments of that wonderful room in the rich man's house and the silvery tone of the woman's voice he had heard there.

"No doubt," said his host, munching his food with good appetite, "you have read your Franklin, or at least my friend Gossom's imitation of him, and you are thinking that Thrift and Prudence and Purpose — with a few more capital-letter virtues — must lead to prosperity and fame *via* the Bank."

"I haven't thought much," the youth confessed. "It's only ten a week."

"And they tied you into the machine for ten a week! And you hope for something better? They'll keep that hope dangling at your nose for forty years!"

"It's something," the youth protested. "Haven't you got a job?"

"I — a job!" The bearded one laughed heartily. "Yes, my child, I have a very big job — the world."

Hugh, concluding that his host was but a harmless lunatic, ate his food in hungry silence, while the bearded one took up the theme suggested and played upon it, as was his wont.

"I'd never take a job at ten or ten thousand a week. I'd never bind myself to the machine."

"One must live!"

"Live? What does it cost to live as I do?" He waved his fork about the bare room. "That's where I get ahead of 'em all. It costs me so little to live they can't lay hands on me. It's fear, my boy, that keeps most poor devils at their mill, — fear and children. As long as you keep one little fear in your heart, lad, you are a coward and a weakling; your masters will own you. Keep away from women, and throttle every fear, and they can't get hold of you. Remember that when you see the bread-line down below some cold day."

Hugh ate on in puzzled silence, as always, not understanding a tithe of the bearded one's words.

"So you brought up at the Bank of the Republic," Wethered mused with a strange smile. "That's the bank where Luke Wright's filthy dollars will be kept for him. And that's the bank which is secretly backing the rivals of the poor devil of a contractor you saw here, a big corporation that has most of the work in the City and wants it all. It's the bank that is trying to freeze McHenry out — but those are little things. The real work nobody knows until it is done. Watch your superiors, boy — especially the big boss, Oliver Whiting. He knows his world better than most. He is arriving. You will read his advice in Gossom's pamphlet — 'Hints for Success,' — and he will talk to you at the Y. M. C. A. He is a good man, prudent and public-spirited, and his name is often in the public print. But ask him how he made his millions as a bank president."

"I don't suppose he would tell me."

His host pushed back from the table and lighted his pipe.

"No; but some day you may understand!"

"Anyway," yawned the youth, "it's a job and a start!"

Wethered waved his pipe at the great sign, which beamed unwinkingly upon them. "They've got you!"

The youth's eyes were raised above the symbol, and in the soft heavens he beheld the winding river, the marshes, the brooding sea at evening. His companion stroked his big beard and murmured:—

"Eat or be eaten! . . . You are tied into the loom, and few there are strong enough to tear themselves free from the industrial machine, once it has its grip upon them. As I have freed myself!" He drew himself to the full of his gaunt shabby height, but the youth could see in him no special matter for pride. "I would not conform—and I am an outcast!"

And to the youth's inquiring eyes, he answered, "You are thinking that there is a way of pleasant compromise,—to own your soul and eat your cake. But the hour will come when you will understand the truth of my words—that he who will not eat his brother must be eaten."

The broad beam of yellow light fell between the two men, and with clenched hand raised in defiance to the burning Symbol, the bearded one affirmed solemnly:—

"The law of this world is a life for a life."

"A life for a life!" the youth repeated questioningly, and without knowing why, he shrank away from the bearded stranger, even as in the carriage that morning he had shrunk from Alexander Arnold.

VI

THE ANARCH AND HIS FRIENDS

AND yet from the cloudy horizon of those early years that was the figure which emerged most distinctly — the shabby bearded fellow, his mouth full of wild speech and ironic laughter, his heart glowing with hate. Assuming towards the youth the pose of guide and teacher, he remained always a stranger, mysterious in his comings and goings, half mad at the least in word and deed. In those after years of prosperity, borne by the rushing tide of action, Hugh Grant might well wonder at the fate that had brought him first to anchor here in the attic chamber opposite the golden symbol of success, and linked his ignorant youth with this rebel and his friends — strange crew! But in the full survey of his life he would understand the import of the accident.

The shabby quarter about the old square, just off the stream of City traffic, midway between trade and squalor, soon grew to have a friendly aspect, something more of the face of home than any other corner of the great City. The mansions around the square, worn and tottering to their inevitable decline, had the fixed face of age, survivors of a settled order of life less harsh and crowded than the present. And the landmarks which Wethered had pointed out, each had its significance for the youth, became in its way a part of him — the Success School, the Sewing Loft, the Sweet Factory, the Good Deeds Office. . . .

Of the many faces that belonged to this time some utterly faded as time sped; others became submerged to appear again

in later years at other points of contact. A few ran side by side throughout the weaving course of his life. And each brought to the growing youth something of knowledge and example.

Ellgood, the architect, came tapping occasionally at the door, usually seeking for something. There seemed to be an old bond between these two unlike men, — the shabby Anarch and the smart young architect. But the bearded one treated him with open scorn.

"Have you married that rich girl yet?" he would ask, — explaining later to Hugh, "Ellgood has been dangling after the daughters of the rich ever since he landed here from Paris. The arts are feminine — parasitic."

The youth was attracted by the handsome young architect, with his air of pleasant worldliness. It was he who called the bearded one "Anarch." "How are you, old Anarch?" he would say, with a subtle accent of contempt. "Bread and cheese enough, eh?" And Wethered would retort: "How is the market for champagne and plover? Are you still boarding free along the avenue?" The sneer did not ruffle the architect's good temper. And when Hugh met him stepping into a cab in front of his club on the square, dangling a cane with a long coat and a high silk hat, like a story-book young man, he had a sneaking pleasure in the little nod of recognition the architect bestowed upon him. The Anarch called him "another case of degeneration like Luke Wright," but his bitter prophecy seemed gainsaid in the event. For, although Ellgood married the rich man's daughter, as expected, he became a notable architect. He it was who designed the florid museum which Alexander Arnold was induced to bestow upon his fellow-citizens, — "in recognition of his debt to Society." And it was Ellgood, also, who designed that classic temple of pure marble in which the banker Whiting finally housed the great Bank of

the Republic. His masterpiece, that. And there were many other notable buildings by his hand, — rich men's houses, clubs and great office buildings. Perhaps he knew his business, these days of flowering force, by a surer instinct than the Anarch. "A talent," the bearded one admitted grudgingly, in the face of his growing fame, "but a dead soul." And that day years afterward, in the time of his tumultuous prosperity, when Hugh saw the architect, wrapped in furs like a bear, swiftly whirling in his great car down the avenue, dull-eyed and flabby-cheeked, the man Hugh Grant then understood what the Anarch had meant: he saw the taint of Ellgood's florid art, the taint of his greedy soul. For this reason, perhaps, he was best fitted to build for a predatory age!

There was another artist who frequented the attic room, for the most part a mere silent listener, like the youth, to the wordy flood. He would sit before the fire, smoking a black pipe, and from time to time spit with smiling emphasis into the hot coals. He was a sculptor, — a heavy man with muddy complexion and a thick, stubby nose, altogether homely, and shabbier even than the bearded one himself. The Anarch wholly approved and admired this ugly follower of the Arts.

"There is a great man!" he proclaimed. "None of your parasite Ellgoods, men of the world, the rich world. That one can starve!"

Hugh laughed at the absurd praise. What virtue was there in starving? Only weaklings and fools had to starve in this thriving land, so he had been taught. When the Anarch took him one day to the black hole in an abandoned loft near the water-side where the sculptor worked — a cold, gray, barnlike place — and he beheld there those huge masses of clay which to his unknowing eye seemed as ugly as the sculptor himself, as gray and cheerless as the loft itself, he thought it was

small wonder the man should starve. "What's that?" he asked, pointing to the colossal figure in the centre, swathed in wrappings of cloth, from which emerged a huge, rude head. "That," said the sculptor, grinning at the youth, "is the spirit of your country. See!" — he unwound the cloths, — "the chin, the lips, the hands!" Thick lips protruded from a heavy jaw, and large, hungry, curving paws were slightly raised.

"Great!" acclaimed the Anarch. "You have said it all — almost all." But the youth denied it in his heart, and silently turned away.

"Take him to see some of those smooth-limbed women at the show!" the sculptor laughed, re-covering his figure with the cloths. "That would be more to his taste."

The Anarch eulogized as they left the loft. "There's a man who makes no compromises, no concessions to circumstances. He can't get his things exhibited — can't put 'em into bronze and marble. So he starves and works on for his idea." He tapped his broad breast dramatically. "The thing here, within!" It would have been wiser, the youth thought, if he had accepted Ellgood's offer to do a fountain for a large garden in a rich man's estate. But the time came when he stood before the sculptor's masterpiece at the entrance to a public park in a western city; in the bronze mounted figure, with stern, commanding, and yet sweet features he recognized a kinship with that misshapen colossus in clay. And in the presence of that piece of beauty which had emerged at last from chaos and ugliness, he knew the mysterious way of truth, struggling to light from dark and dreadful conception. . . .

A queer, confused period of education, all this, to the youth who listened to the flow of opinion and belief in the attic chamber. The amazing discovery came to him gradually that this life which he had taken for granted, with its sim-

"What are you making of yourself, my son, in this big, turbulent world, brimming with fine opportunities? Your chance, remember, is slipping by, day by day, hour after hour. Seize it!"

What was he making of his life, indeed?

VII

THE GREAT MACHINE

SURELY in this nebulous life of the youth, there was one firm fact — his job. That seized him, like the relentless stroke of a mighty piston, six days of the seven, at the morning hour, and bore him in its forceful sweep until at nightfall he was released to join the army of his fellow-workers ebbing homewards through the streets.

The Bank! From his perch in the gallery above the large banking-room, it seemed like a living creature, pulsing the busy hours, its veins filled with a stream of gold. Below him were the little cages, in which the clerks were locked with their piles of currency, and before the wire screens filed a ceaseless procession — clerks, messengers, brokers, men of affairs, paying in money, drawing money, getting credit, taking up bills. To these men fingering money in one shape or another, life was Fact, not Theory, — urgent, insistent fact to be dealt with immediately, not tossed on the wings of words. And there were stories in their faces, in their attitudes before the little windows of the wire cages. The blustering one trembled as he leaned confidentially over the cashier's desk, telling his tale, urging his claim for credit. A nod, a sweep of the pen, and his fate was settled; boldly he strode out into the fight! Another crept up stealthily to take his place at the confessional of the market; then, downcast, went his way. The young man before the teller's window, — some broker's clerk, — careless, cigar in mouth, crumpled the crisp bills in his fist and shoved them lightly into his pocket, then

hastened on winged feet to his desire, to make place for the messenger lad, with his burden of cheques and drafts and bills for deposit, more money than he might ever own in his whole life.

It was a stream of money flowing through the banking hours. The stuff itself lay stacked within the wire cages, sheaf of colored bills, piles of coin, cheques, drafts, notes, agreements, bonds. Money! He saw it handled all the day; its symbols passed before his eyes. He smelled its acrid odor on the hot air. He heard its name on all sides. The sensual symbol of possession permeated his every sense. He saw it, breathed it, touched it, smelled it! And soon this thing, so tangible, came to have an inner meaning to the young bank clerk. Beneath the signatures upon cheques, the graven lines of commercial paper, the stamped faces of coins, he saw the desires of men, of which these were but the convenient symbols. Desires of flesh and of spirit, — women and food and clothes and houses, honor and charity and pride, — delight and necessity, — all these lay within the slips of paper in his hands. The Bank was a storehouse of Desire, and hence of life itself.

He had quickly learned his little task in the hive, — the endless handling of these symbols, verifying signatures, making entries, computing, arranging, — the mechanical routine of the cog in the machine. A neat, nimble, faithful lad, with the country earnestness over his task, he was soon advanced to a better post in the clerks' gallery, with a few dollars added to that weekly wage for which, according to the Anarch, he had "bound himself slave to the masters."

When he was again moved on, this time coming within one of the wire cages, he told the bearded fellow with some pride of his success, and the Anarch burst into one of his gales of ironic laughter.

"Already, my boy, your foot up one round of the ladder! Climb! Climb! You see yourself now in the cashier's perch, then the vice-president's desk, the president's private office, the directors' rooms. That's the ass's bait they dangle before lusty youth. If you are strong and thrifty, you'll find yourself by forty in a steam-heated flat with a wife and a couple of young, and less money than you have to-day in your pocket. If you are clever and learn the game, you may attain even the dignity of the cashier's suburban cottage, and send your son to college. But nothing more — unless you grow claws, my boy, sharp claws!"

But for all the bearded man's scoffing, the youth knew that life was good, and fingering the fresh bills in his pocket, he went out and got himself clothes at a tailor's.

"Ah," exclaimed the Anarch, beholding this transformation, "some good clothes! Tailor-made, too. Let's look, my boy!" He turned Hugh around and surveyed him with mock gravity. "Quite like our friend Ellgood — the same tailor, eh? That's right; clothes count where you aspire to climb. They are the first outward sign of the inner grace of Success. 'Tis one of the profoundest mysteries, the potency of smart clothes. For man or woman they hide the soul and earn false credit." He discoursed on what he called the bluff of appearance, the national habit of making a good show. "It takes courage to go shabby like me, when 'tis so easy to look like the best!" and he added, "You will not be long for these quarters now. After clothes comes comfortable housing among the prosperous. What do you think of Ellgood's club?" The youth blushed. For it was true that he had studied the architect's clothes, and had thought that life behind the privileged privacy of the club doors must be pleasant. And as the Anarch predicted, it was not long before he moved away, a short half mile as the bird flies above the City roofs, but into another world altogether.

Meantime, with his new clothes and a greater assurance, he was finding his way about the City, in his few idle hours. He watched the pretty women on the avenues, richly snuggled in furs, tripping from carriages to shops, casting wise glances at the playthings there spread out. These daughters of the City made the heart of youth pulse in furtive romance. This one with flowers at her breast, what was she? . . . Ah, these pavement romances, — the lonely youth and the pretty women of luxury! They seemed of other flesh than his, of another world. . . . And he heard again the silvery voice in the silent room. For youth must be in the keeping of some woman's hands, given over by his mother to romance and the wonderful creatures of his own fashioning!

Yet when by chance he met the farmer's daughter, May Todd, in the street, the spark of fire somehow did not strike, though the girl once kissed greeted him with smile and was affably communicative. She was established in the City, at last, having achieved her heart's desire in one way if not another. She was "studying music," she told him, and had discovered in herself the possibilities of a "career." "Father wants me to come back, but I can't give up my career now." She spoke of her "career," as a man might, with solemnity. "One owes it to the world to make the best of one's self, don't you think?" she said, patting her muff. "And I could never stifle my talent, if I have one, after this larger life!" She glanced up the crowded street of the great City, amorously.

May was thinner, and she, too, knew the value of good clothes. She was dressed smartly, with heavy furs, and she gave the appearance of a woman of dignity and position. She might live in a tiny room in a great hive of apartments. But on the street she was any woman's equal. They walked along the populous avenue at its hour of lamping beauty, —

two youths in the city venture, — and May spoke of her brother.

"He's Mr. Gossom's right-hand man," she said, "sure of a successful future." So, Hugh learned, Percy Todd, the farmer's son, was one of Gossom's voices. "Career" was the word May used of Percy as of herself — a word often on her lips. For when he revealed his connection with the Bank of the Republic, she said at once, "Finance offers a great career these days!" And the bank clerk, conscious of the smallness of his cog in the machine, murmured, "I suppose so." They parted, and she spoke of their meeting again, vaguely, as if she were not altogether assured of his "career." Hugh, with a feeling that he should never seek her out, left her at the door of a shop, and the next morning had utterly forgotten her.

The Bank had two faces, Hugh discovered. The one was open to all, the busy face turned to the street, to which men came with their affairs. That was the face with which he was concerned. That face witnessed tragedies, and these the youth observed. Standing beside the desk of the assistant cashier, — that blue-eyed, kindly Venable, who had received him at the Bank and set him his task, — he saw the shirt manufacturer, Benton, when he was refused an extension of credit. The whipped man, with a weary face of despair, left the bank.

"Poor devil!" the assistant cashier murmured to the youth. "These are hard times for the little fellows."

Hugh knew that the shirt-waist man must fail, now that the bank had withdrawn its supporting hand, and he wondered what would become of the girls at the electric machines.

"People aren't buying *lingerie* these days," Venable explained. "And the Bank doesn't want that sort of business



any more. The day of the little fellows is over for good, I am afraid!"

The assistant cashier was a man of broader views than his class, and he had a kind heart. He cared for the fate of "the little fellows," Hugh felt.

Not long after he saw that the City Construction Company had its broad sign upon that great building on the avenue, now nearly completed, and he remembered that the contractor Harding, whom he had seen in Wethered's room, had failed. "His loans had been called at the bank." So he too had gone down to defeat in the competitive battle; his evil bargain with the labor broker had not availed against the strength of his rival. The City Construction Company, every one knew, was a lusty young corporation, favored at the Bank, which had "financed" it. Its securities lay in the private vaults beneath the bank, with many others, and the youth, pondering all this, perceived dimly that other face of the Bank, the one turned inward.

Behind the doors of the private offices that face appeared, and certain mighty ones of the City went in to it. He saw them. Alexander Arnold, whose name was fast becoming a proverb in men's mouths for grasping possession, came there rarely and also Ravi, the railroad man, with the languid air of fashion. But Talbot and Steele and Dexter, of the "Republic crowd," came daily, and gave the youth his first perplexed conception of men of power. Above all in his eyes was the banker Oliver Whiting, the handsome, amiable president. Whiting, though oblivious of Hugh's existence, was next to the Anarch the busiest figure in the youth's imagination. As he came glowing into the bank, bubbling with energy and health, elastic and commanding in step, he was the figure of competence and success.

These all went into the inner shrine of Finance, in the

private rooms of the bank, but exactly what went on within must remain a mystery for the young clerk as yet. Slowly the mystic words "syndicate" and "underwriting" began to fill with meaning. When he went down into the bowels of the bank, — to those vaults buried far beneath the earth where in musty silence reposed precious papers, stocks, bonds, agreements, little pieces of fine linen nicely engraved, he knew that there was connection between such hoarded treasures and that shrine of Finance in which the intimate face of the Bank, discreetly veiled to the public, was exposed. Standing there in the still, steel-bound, well-guarded vaults, he saw men unlock the little doors of private boxes, under the watchful eyes of the guards, and he felt the mysterious power of the crisp papers, reposing in their tin boxes, — condensed property, hoarded desires, latent life! The vaults of the bank were a magazine of lives, men's lives. So the youth dreamed of it, but of that larger influence of the shrine above upon himself, and everybody around him, he was altogether ignorant as yet. . . .

The Bank absorbed another bank, and still another. It took more space in the great building, employed more clerks; it was growing, expanding, making alliances, increasing the size of its transactions, growing like a human giant with an inner vitality that must express itself. And the little cog in the machine was moved hither and thither as best fitted the purposes of the machine. He had left the busy banking-room, moved upwards to the trust department, nearer the heart of it all.

"You must see the whole," said Venable, who seemed to have a kindly care for the youth.

Yet he remained the cog, the tool, which in the vast computation machine performed its act for the total result at the will of others — like the multitude that crossed the great bridge. But deep within him lay the sense of another power, — a will to do, to create, — the builder's power. Arnold,

Whiting, and the others were building, each in his way, — building him into their works. Between him and the field in which they seemed to move in a large freedom lay a thick wall, and he began to wonder if the Anarch were not right when he said that no faithful service, no mere fidelity to the virtues, would open a door in that wall. He believed that on the other side of the wall there was a wonderful land in which men achieved their wills, where there was beauty and splendor and pleasure to be had — where the silvery voice could be heard again!

For the dominion of things was entering the soul of the youth, and he had begun to hunger.

VIII

ENSHRINED AND SAINTED

BUT before he was to enter the desired land beyond the wall, another experience came to him, broadening and softening his life. It happened unannounced, by accident, as most that was important in his life was to come to him.

Lying in fever in the attic chamber, he was watching the eyes of the golden Symbol. He did not know how long he had lain thus alone. The Anarch was away on one of his long absences, and none had knocked at the door, or he had been too ill to note. He had come back from the bank one evening in pain and thrown himself upon his bed. And when he awoke the Symbol mocked him with its hard eyes. In his dreams he had heard the waves of the sea, as in storm, and then they had died down in a low murmur as of the tide along the sands. That was night, and the subdued traffic of the street. But the eyes of the Symbol shone pitilessly upon him, mocking:—

“Ho!” they said, “are you that youth who came up to conquer the City? You are soon bested, indeed. You will join the bread-line around the corner, or sleep on the public benches. For in the City no one waits for the weak. Your job has gone! Hear that—your job has gone! Another with a surer hand has taken it.”

So the sign mocked, and the youth in his fever began to know Fear—that terrible devil the Anarch had predicted. Fear not so much for his own small self, as for those others who looked to him for help. And with fear came the sense of failure. What the Symbol said was true: the City had beaten

him thus quickly. He closed his eyes to shut out the mocking eyes, and in his feverish vision he was once more treading the familiar road down the valley toward the sea. He was striving vainly to reach an unknown goal. . . .

Then he heard a human voice and looked into the faded blue eyes of the assistant cashier. The humorous face was grave.

"Knocked out, eh?" Venable said. "I thought when you sent no word that something must be the matter."

He looked inquiringly about the bare room, and when his eyes spied the electric sign in full blaze he exclaimed:—

"I see that you have established yourself under the proper banner!"

He nodded ironically at the Symbol, and then, taking the youth's hot hand in his cool grasp, murmured:—

"Fever! We must get you out of this quick."

Thereupon Hugh was wafted somehow from his attic chamber and set down in a little brown cottage in the distant suburb where the Venables lived. He remembered vaguely a woman standing at the door, — a woman with a broad, homely face and large, competent hands.

"Put him in our room, Alf," he heard her say. And then came a blank space, from which he awoke as it seemed long afterwards to an unaccustomed plane of life. He saw the little bedroom in which he lay, with its worn furniture and shelves crowded with books. From the open window came the cries of children at play in the strip of back yard. It was afternoon in the city suburb, and he thought he could hear afar off the rumble of the mighty City. Then he closed his eyes, and presently dreamed that he was speeding down the valley along the familiar country road, and in his ears sounded once more that unearthly music awakened by the chimes. All these months and years that he had spent in the City he had not heard this song of his soul, had not seen the

great spaces, felt the rushing presence of immortal beings. . . . Then the weaving notes began to soar, to strive as he strove, to battle, and in his troubled consciousness there was the struggle between the inner and the outer worlds. At last with a discord the music ceased altogether, and he came again to earth in the plain day of the suburban afternoon. He must have uttered some cry, for a tall woman dressed in black, with a pale, thin face, appeared at the door, and seeing his eager face said: —

"I must have wakened you with my playing. I forgot."

"What was it?" he asked breathlessly.

"Oh, nothing," she replied evasively. "I will call Mrs. Venable."

The large woman came and made him comfortable in his tumbled bed. But he had eyes only for the other, whose pale face with the light smile on the lips seemed wondrously beautiful. He tried to tell her of that other world of ecstasy from which he had just come, and she smiled indulgently, saying: —

"I'll play for you again some day."

He learned from Mrs. Venable that the other woman was the wife of an organist, and herself a musician. And he came to know her with others in that friendly group of people at Columbia Heights.

For they kept him a long time in the little wooden cottage, already overrun with a family of noisy boys, until he was once more strong. It was a rough, simple house, this home of the assistant cashier, full of books and warm with friendly meetings. It was one of a long row, all of which were exactly alike, except for slight freakish variations in architectural adornment.

"I wish they would label them, or stick some sort of totem pole before the doors," Venable complained. "When you're late or your vision has been a trifle confused by a glass on the

way home, you are in danger of turning in at the wrong gate. Think of the consequences!"

When Hugh first strolled into the suburban street and beheld the endless rows of dingy wooden cottages, arranged mathematically, with rows of dusty trees before each one, he comprehended the difficulty. Columbia Heights must have been named in some contractor's dream, for it was perfectly flat, and each small lot was like all the others. Every morning it was emptied of its men, abandoned for the day to women and children. Hugh wondered that so important a man as the assistant cashier of the Bank of the Republic was content to live in a rented house of this monotonous character.

Yet the personal stamp that the contractor had failed to give their dwelling, the Venables had contrived to put within. Shabby and ugly it might be, but the youth remembered it as a kindly place, full of busy life and pleasant talk. There were the noisy boys, with their dog, and Mrs. Venable's endless housekeeping, vain effort "to keep things together." There was Venable's "shop" in the attic, where with incredible labor he brought forth useless inventions. And there were the books, for Venable was a hearty reader, — a learned man for mere business. He had graduated from the great City university years before, with every promise of a "career," which somehow had come to nothing. In the machine of the bank, where he had an authority all his own, he was recognized as an able, bookish man, but "old Ven will never go up," they said. There were traditions about him at the Bank, absurd on the face, most of them: some crime committed years before, condoned because of his usefulness, but never erased entirely from memory; some colossal blunder costly to the machine — neither of these tales credible to Hugh. And there was a story, vague and romantic, that he had stood between some thieving officers and their loot, — "knew too much," for their good and his own. Whatever the cause, the matter had been long settled,

and the sacrifice, or the mistake, had been accepted quietly; the man had taken his fixed place in the ranks without murmur. When Hugh saw him enter the house at the end of his day's work, a smile on his face to answer the smile on the homely woman's face, he knew that whatever life had brought these two in the eddies of accident they had taken it and proved it good.

"Alf knows more about money and banks than any of them," the wife said proudly. "He reads and learns. When Mr. Whiting has to make a speech at dinners and meetings, he gets Alf to write it for him!"

"Merely to furnish a little superfluous information with which to dress his rosy beliefs," Venable corrected. . . .

The little professor who lived near by came in evenings with his pipe, and there was talk of a soberer kind than flowed at the Anarch's. Paul Nesbit, then middle-aged and over-worked in his laboratory at the university, had — so Hugh thought — the most beautiful face he had ever seen in a man. Pale and regular in feature, with firm lines and deep-set eyes, he had the gentleness and the sweetness of the scholar who has never looked to self.

"My boy," he would say to the youth, his hand falling on his shoulder, "how goes it to-day?" And it was a benediction, as was his smile of kindly irony. Within those tired eyes, that sweet smile and gentle voice, the youth knew lay another story, which in time he was to learn. And it was a story worth the knowing, Paul Nesbit's, but now he knew him merely as "the Professor," and unconsciously placed him among women, — of those removed from life!

There was little money in the household, and money was rarely mentioned even by name. Yet he remembered one occasion when the universal theme was touched with a new light. They were gathered in the evening as usual, — the Venables and Madeleine Upton, the organist's wife, with the Professor.

"What's up in your world?" the Professor asked quizzically. "They have cut our appropriations for two years, and now they have taken my best assistant from me."

"Hard times," the cashier replied. "Your benefactors find it easier to retrench in philanthropy than elsewhere. Is it possible that you live so far from the world that you don't know the country has been going slow these last years?"

"Well," the Professor said, "thank God for baccy!" And he filled his pipe from the jar. "But I wish they'd get the old machine running on an even keel, so that we might know where we are. Why should there be hard times, anyway?"

"Yes," chimed in the women, "why should there be hard times?"

"Some days you feel grand, and some days you are feeble," Venable chaffed. "It's the same way with the business world — with everybody."

"But when you are down, you just have to pick yourself up and start ahead," his wife suggested.

"Ah, yes. Get confidence. That's what we are trying to do now. But when a lot of people lose their nerve at one time, it is hard to get it back all at once." And he talked on about "over-speculation," "international complications," "foreign exchange," mapping the great currents of world activity that went to make "confidence."

"It's all there," he concluded, "health and prosperity, if we could only believe in it! And some do," he added whimsically. "The big fellows have seen this coming for a long time, and like the wild animals up north that put on thicker coats before a hard winter, they are ready. They are making money! They are always making money. Alexander Arnold, you will find, is not complaining of hard times. These are bargain days at the financial counter."

"It's wicked!" his wife exclaimed.

"What?"

"That he should be adding to his millions, while others are starving and out of work."

The men smiled.

"The strong have always taken the meat from the weak; they always will."

There again was the idea heard so often in the Anarch's room. "They" — the Strong — somehow obtained their wills at the expense of the many weak. As the Anarch crudely pictured it, "they" stood like bandits at the street corner to rob the helpless and unwary. But the more learned cashier presented the idea differently: "they" with their superior knowledge and wisdom waited until the weak and the foolish presented them with their gold for the sake of livelihood. But it was fundamentally the same — the strong lived on the weak.

"A life for a life," the youth murmured, involuntarily. And yet the words meant nothing to him.

"It's right!" the pale dark woman suddenly exclaimed. "The strong deserve what they get. Each one of us would do the same thing, if we could. We would live our lives to the utmost, no matter what it cost to the crowd. And it's best for all the world that some are strong enough to live!"

"Madeleine!" Mrs. Venable exclaimed.

"Rebel!" the cashier laughed.

"It depends on what is 'life,'" the Professor suggested.

The dark woman, flushed with an inner heat, looked at him disdainfully.

"Every one knows what life is! Yes, it is well that the strong should live and the weak go under. All else is just sentimental. The strong are beautiful and able — they deserve to live. . . . Yes, I spend my days sewing fine linen for some woman to wear, and I like to think that she can make herself pretty with lovely things and show herself abroad in the world and have her little triumph, while I sew away in my small room. If I were in her place —" She gave a little gesture of triumph.

"If you had children, you would feel differently," Mrs. Venable remarked severely.

"No, I'd feel all the more like that. I'd want them to win — to conquer, to triumph, to possess. And you do too!"

"You see," observed Venable, "there can be no different social state while women feel as they do."

Hugh admired the spirit of the organist's wife and the beauty of her face.

"It's all a question of the food supply!"

And so the talk flowed on here, as in the attic chamber, about the way of this world, and the condition of living therein. Foolish, thought the youth, because obviously no one could change the puzzle by willing it changed. There was food to be got, the job to be done. Some got more and better food; for some the job was better paid. And to him the chief concern was to be of those well paid. Venable was saying: —

"The capitalistic scheme will last out our day, I've no doubt. So the wise will continue to put money in their purses, to buy when others are afraid, to sell when others are in hope. The poor will become poorer because they are poor, and the rich will become richer because they are of the nature to be rich."

"That seems a wicked world," his wife sighed.

"Only an instinctive one; each animal obeys its instincts. The acquisitive acquire."

"I'd best sell my books and buy stocks, then," the Professor remarked.

"Buy anything — and hold it!" He turned ironically to Hugh. "I hope that you have followed Oliver's noble precept, and saved a dollar each week from your wages."

The youth smiled feebly.

"No? Well, you might have been tempted to invest your savings in a gamble and lost them. Put it into experience, boy! *That's* sure to bring its dividends. . . . When I was

younger, I saved five thousand dollars and "invested," but some cooler head than mine wanted my stock, and he got it — I don't know how! I learned the lesson — never saved a cent since."

"You never had the chance, dear. You've put it into us," his wife laughed.

"Hear that, Georgius preferred!" Venable called to the oldest boy, who was doing his lessons at the table. "What have you been earning to-day on the family investment?"

And so the talk passed over to pure banter. But when the organist's wife had left them, Mrs. Venable said: —

"Poor Madeleine! Her troubles make her restless. Did you find him, Alf?"

Venable shook his head.

"He has been away almost a week this time — it must be dreadful! And then when he comes back — poor creature!"

"He has not been that way for months," the Professor said. "It will wear off in the course of time, as he gets older."

"But what a life!" the woman protested. "Never to know — to watch and wait every day, for that thing to appear. Never to know at night whether the man or the beast will wake in the morning. Never to know in the morning whether the man or the beast will return at night. No wonder she admires strength!"

"But she will never give him up; it's been ten good years now."

"The best of her life," the woman added. But the Professor said, — "It is her life, perhaps."

"She had friends and talent and position — everything, and she gave them all for that weak creature with his evil appetite!"

Her husband smiled gently.

"She knows him! When he begins to walk the floor and twist his long fingers, she understands. She takes him, if she

can, off somewhere into the country, and they live alone in a cabin until the fit passes. But this time he escaped her."

"I wish he might never come back!"

"I wonder," said her husband, "if *she* does."

So, it seemed, the pale dark woman with the suppressed fire in her face, was partner in tragedy, spending herself in a struggle with the weak will of another.

A story to fire the heart of youth! In the weeks that followed, Hugh was often at the wooden cottage with the organist and his wife, silently worshipping the pale woman, watching the thin white fingers at their endless task of making beauty for some other to wear. The organist came and went like a ghost. The diseased habit had eaten into him, blurring his talent, dragging him down and her with him, until she had become the supporter of their simple life. With the few stout friends by her side, she had fought the ten years' fight, which would end only when the man was utterly burned out, no longer vital for good or evil. And she sewed on, outwardly calm, in firm resolve, as though hers was the common lot. She had been tempted, urged, to leave the weakling to his fate, to separate herself from this disease in one of the many convenient ways provided by a highly organized civilization that puts the weak and the offensive from its sight. But she would not. No, she would not! No wonder to Hugh she became "enshrined and sainted," and he joined that group of friends, who struggled with her.

Many hours he sat in the little room while she sewed and talked, telling him of other worlds, the gay days in European cities when she had first known the organist, the days of artist hopes. It was the life of beauty and creation that she had dreamed as a girl would be hers, and the glamor of it all still burned in her eyes. Hugh, listening, understood: this was more compelling than the lure of money and possession — beauty and fame and the quick pulsing life of art.

"But it was not to be," she said, dropping the little cuff from her fingers. "It was not to be!" and with a smile she pushed the needle into the soft linen.

They went out into the dull, dusty streets of the suburb, seeking to find green things, the open spaces of the country. And she talked of the Venables. For the assistant cashier she had an immense admiration, — the friend tried and known to the core, and resented his fate.

"An underling in a bank, a clerk!" she said. "With his mind he might have done things. But he married young, and his wife has no ambition."

"They are happy," the youth said.

"No man of power forgives a defeated career!" she flashed. And she told him the story of Venable's marriage to a poor stenographer, who was ill and without friends. "He just married her and took her from the grind — gave her everything. But —" Her lips closed, as fearful of a disloyal word. "What will his children have? Not his education — no place in life. They will be clerks, just clerks!" And her voice was filled with rebel scorn.

"They seem content."

"With this!" The word scorched with contempt the suburban street, now silent and dead. Her gesture indicted the respectable conformity and all the virtues of Columbia Heights. It was a cry from the depth of defeated years, in which lay lost possibilities, aspirations, hopes, and ambitions, all dead in the clear light of middle age.

"I think there must be another side to it," the youth said vaguely, stirred by the touch of passion in this pale woman.

She smiled strangely and said, "Come!"

They entered the ugly brick church where the organist was playing to himself. Within the door it seemed cool and dim, and the rich tones of the organ came rolling across to them, — pleading, dying, then swelling in thunder of protest. The

IX

THE GIRL WITH THE MAIMED HAND

COLUMBIA HEIGHTS and the homely kindliness of warm hearts there sank into the misty background, as did the attic chamber and the Anarch's crew. There must have come somehow a rift between the youth and the bearded one. Perhaps, as he climbed higher on his ladder, he permitted himself to scoff at the Anarch and flouted his philosophy. For a period, however, after leaving the prosaic suburb, and before settling in the comfortable quarters farther up the City, he must have returned to his old roost.

And just here — link between old and new — slips in a memory with a fragrance all its own. Pretty little gum-chewing Minna! Hugh had noticed her among the sewing girls in the loft before the shirt-waist man went down in the struggle after his brief interview at the bank. "They have taken her back," he thought, rejoiced that the Anarch's gloomy prediction had been false. He met her on the street with her companions, the sleeve of her wrap gathered close about her maimed hand. She was laughing light-heartedly. Enough of her capital, it seemed, had been left her to earn bread.

When the loft became dark after Benton's failure, Hugh lost sight of the girl, until one night as he happened to round the square on his way home he was witness of a street encounter. It was the custom for the young men of the quarter — those from Gossom's establishment and others — to gather about the candy factory until the girls appeared, there to par-

yet know what will come to you. Be ready to grasp it when it comes!"

So the woman bent with pale face over her sewing, the woman with the hot rebellious heart, who desired triumph, remained for him always "enshrined and sainted," and while the homely, contented household in the little brown cottage, the fine face of the Professor, faded in the cloud of memories, covered with the much living that was to come, the woman who had lost and endured flashed again and yet again into his living thought. Years later he was to see Columbia Heights in a different illumination. But now he was eager to return to the City, in full expectation of that great page of experience as yet not turned.

Again he was at his desk in the Bank of the Republic.

He left her before she reached the tenement where she lived with her people. But another time, when he had accompanied her at night, he saw her home. Her parents had a suspicious, hostile manner with the young bank clerk.

"They think," Minna explained straightforwardly in apology for her parents, "you're my feller, and they don't want me to have a feller."

"And why not?"

"I'll bring no money home, then, you see."

"But you'll marry," Hugh protested.

"Oh, I'll marry when the right one comes for me!" and she looked at him consciously.

It was the day they had gone to the country together, — a warm summer afternoon, such days as urged the country lad from the City. They had rested through the drowsy afternoon beside a sluggish brook in the thin, house-spotted fields beyond the remote suburbs.

Pretty little gum-chewing Minna, with the fluffy hair, the pert lift of pointed chin, decked in all the imitation finery she could contrive to buy! Pretty little gum-chewing Minna! Her white neck curved softly, promising a woman's gracious amplitude, if given the woman's chance of love and children.

Hugh held the maimed hand with its red scar running over the wrist. A piece of cheap lace did its best to conceal the wound.

"So they didn't cut it off," Hugh said gently.

"No — it was caught in a machine."

"Yes, I know! I was there and saw."

"You!" the girl exclaimed wonderingly, and she added, "It's a fine job — all the doctors said so."

"They couldn't save it."

"Not all — but I can do most as well as other girls with

what's left," she said bravely, "pasting the boxes. And the boss paid the bills!"

With the maimed hand she was holding her own in the struggle against her fate. Minna withdrew her hand and turned so that the other, shapely and white, lay near him. She peeped at the musing youth from under her blonde lashes. He was gazing into the sky in meditation upon the pretty kittenish thing with her wounded paw, wondering what her destiny would be in the grind of life. She displayed a box of candy.

"They're fine. They give us the real thing at the factory if we make time with the boxes — none of that cheap stuff the other boss used to buy us. Try it!"

The poor stump of a hand worked nimbly all the week in the hope of a dozen pieces of sweet! As she nibbled her candy, her eyes fell softly upon the youth. She seemed to say, "Take me! Help me with your strength. I was not meant for the fight, only to be some man's joy — yours? I am waiting, master!" A wave of tenderness came over him, tempting him to respond to the appeal. What the young satyr of the street could not get with force, this other one — the gentler male who had crossed her path accidentally — might have for the asking.

"The Minnas are made for the profession!" the Anarch had said.

But the soul of the youth was still sweet: he knew the face of lust lurking behind the mask. He kissed the maimed hand. . . . Quickly she took it away, feeling pity in place of passion. Her soft willing eyes still covered him.

He rose to his feet. Ambition had steeled his will already. That unknown future which he confidently awaited should not be hazarded with sentimental mistakes on the threshold. So much had he absorbed the lesson of the Symbol. . . .

So they went silently homewards, — a dead happiness weighting them.

“Good-by,” he said quickly at her door.

“Good-by,” Minna murmured, with soft reproach in her eyes.

And Hugh went no more across the bridge at nightfall.

X

THE CHANCE

At last Fortune came tapping at the youth's door, but not in any expected guise.

"There are no accidents in a strong man's life," President Butterfield was wont to enunciate to the young men with their feet upon the threshold of life. "Chance is merely the marvellous pattern of destiny, working in terms of human character for failure or success!"

Nevertheless, something very like accident intervened at this point to prevent Hugh Grant from scaling the heights of fortune in company with Percy Todd, that able young disciple of Gossom, who about this time was launching his weekly magazine, *Ambition*, — a journal of publicity devoted to "the hustler."

Late one fine afternoon Hugh was sitting at his post after business hours, alone in that august apartment of the Bank devoted to affairs of Trust. The other servants of the institution in that department had left their tasks to enjoy the rare hours of a spring holiday, and Hugh was carefully arranging his papers for his successor — for he had decided to venture with Todd in *Ambition*. It had been a busy morning at the Bank, with a note of flurry and agitation that even the underling in the trust department might have perceived, had his usually clear vision not been occupied with self. For latterly in the bright firmament of Prosperity, there had been signs of a crack, and ominous tremors

had thrilled the inner shrines of finance that might make the wary apprehensive. . . . But the young man, unmindful of the moods of the powder house, sat at his desk, whistling.

"Grant!"

Through the open door he saw the fine figure of his chief, Oliver Whiting. The banker had hold of the door of his private office in one hand, and with the other beckoned to the clerk.

When Hugh entered the president's office, the banker closed the door, and as he reseated himself at his desk, Hugh noticed that the usually ruddy, youthful face of his chief was gray and beads of perspiration were standing on his brow. He must be ill, the young man thought, and was about to speak when the telephone sounded and the banker, motioning Hugh to remain, took up the instrument and answered the call in low tones.

"Not there! No one knows —" The banker replaced the telephone, and Hugh saw that the hand about the instrument trembled.

"Grant," Whiting spoke heavily, as if breathing with effort, "there's trouble!" He turned slowly in his chair, and looked at the young man with anxious eyes. "The National Deposit — clearing house — suspension — involved — must act," — Hugh heard the hurried phrases as if in a dream as they fell from the lips of the trembling man. His mind swiftly filled in the implications of the broken phrases. The Deposit Bank, the mighty institution over the way, their most noted rival, was in troubled waters. Nay, more, the Bank of the Republic itself was in some way involved, in danger!

With all the breathless import of this, the young man had a feeling of contempt for the agitation displayed on the pallid face before him. Oliver Whiting, — "the youngest and the ablest banker in the City," — Oliver, the philanthropist

and the speechmaker, had lost his nerve! In the face of danger his hand was trembling as if with palsy. All the years that the young man had served the Bank, admiring his chief from a distance, he had thought of him as strength,—ruddy efficiency and self-control. Never again in all his life would Oliver Whiting be more to him than common clay. He could not see that vision of the public which the banker beheld, before whom he had stood as a bulwark of rectitude and sagacity. And now that public must see him as he was—a gambler.

Hugh waited silently until the banker had gained control of himself.

"We must find Mr. Arnold!" Whiting exclaimed at last. "He had an appointment with me this morning—but nobody knows where he is. . . . I can't leave. . . . He may be in the City. . . . He may have gone South. . . . Take my car. . . . Find him. Go to—" He mentioned an address in a side street where it was whispered the great man took his relaxation according to his temperament. "Try the broker Rickers—go—" and he mentioned a number of possible addresses. "When you find him, communicate with me at once, no matter when—I will be here!" And as the young man rose, the banker cried,— "Take my car—go!" and seized the telephone in his trembling hand. But before Hugh had left the room, Whiting called to him,— "Mind! Not a word to a living soul!"

Hugh smiled back into the troubled eyes with a look of amused contempt, and without a word closed the door.

He hastened through the empty rooms, so solid and decorous with their carpeted floors, their polished desks, and as he sped down to the street he had a curious sense of the crumbling waywardness of things. The Bank of the Republic fail! It was like the parting of the earth beneath

one's feet. And he thought of the silent, dark vaults beneath where the guards patrolled, watching millions of treasured securities, the property of many. If the people on the street only knew what was in his mind, there would be more anxious faces. . . .

He was leaping up the City in the banker's new motor-car, — it was one of the first of these machines to be seen in the City, — and he smiled to himself in youthful exhilaration over his mission. As in days of old, the king's minister, in dire extremity, had sent a messenger in search of his master, who was dallying somewhere in the vast City with his woman, while the empire was cracking. When the car paused in front of that discreet house on the side street, to which the banker had given him the address, a wave of youthful cynicism shot over Hugh; for the mood of cynicism is born in the young when they perceive for themselves a discrepancy between outward seeming and inward truth. . . . Behind the thick curtains of the discreet mansion nothing was to be learned, and the young man went racing on once more.

In all that hurrying throng of the City, bent homewards for their half holiday under the golden light of the westering sun, he alone knew what fate was in store for the people on the Monday. For the first time in his life the issues of things about him began to loom large. For each one there in the streets, according to his kind, this impending fate must have its effect. The working-girl, the man with his dinner-pail slouching across the lofty bridge in the black stream, the jaunty clerk, the smart lady in her car, — nay, the millions and millions all over the land, — must feel this shock, the crumble of credit and confidence. It meant the chance to work, the veritable bread of life — in the last impact of the wide wave! He must find the one man who could stay the flood, perhaps.

At the broker Rickers's house, his last hope was defeated. The youth at the door refused all information about the doings of his lady, and the messenger sadly gave the order to return to the Bank. The car became tangled in the traffic in front of a newspaper building. On the placards was lettered in colored ink the latest news. He read, — "PANIC — RUMORED FAILURE OF TWO BANKS — SUSPENSION, ETC." So soon, he thought, had the news gone forth in rumor! The idle crowd about the billboards stared silently at the fateful words, ignorant or careless of their meaning. A few hours before all had been serene, at least upon the surface, and the busy multitude was absorbed in its labors. For after many lean years had not prosperity at last come to stay?

"How goes it, my boy?" The shabby Anarch was standing beside the car, his bearded lips parted in a sneer. "A fine new chariot you've got there." And with a wave towards the red placards, he added, "Some of us will be walking before long. The big house of cards is toppling down, it would seem. It will bury a few of the rats, I hope."

"There's trouble," Hugh assented, with wise reserve.

"Panic — that's what they call it!" the Anarch cried. "It means that the big ones have decided it's time to eat up the little fry. Panic!" he repeated in scorn. "A few hours ago I saw the fattest spider of all in one of these great cars speeding northwards, a woman by his side. Little he cares, once within Paradise Valley, what goes on here in the City. What does panic mean to Alexander Arnold? A chance to buy back cheap the goods he's sold to the public."

"Alexander Arnold — you saw *him*?" Hugh demanded.

The Anarch nodded with a singularly disagreeable smile.

"He had a woman with him, — a large white woman with a big plumed hat — always a woman!" he muttered savagely. "They must be at Paradise Hall by this time. . . . What

does it mean to *these?*" He pointed to the gathering throng in front of the billboards. But Hugh did not answer, for the car, at last free to move, had started, and leaning forward he had given an order to the driver. "The station!"

It was a chance, the Anarch's random word, and he must go until he found his man. So without reply to the bearded one, who looked after him with speculative eyes, Hugh sped on his way to catch the north express, which would take him to Paradise Valley, — Arnold's country seat among the hills.

And as he sped, he thought of the haggard banker clutching the telephone in his office at the Bank. He might send word whither he had gone and relieve Whiting's mind. But he would not! Let him shake and shiver an hour or two in fear. "A house of cards," the Anarch had said. "Capitalizing Hope," Venable called it. "Overspeculation," the papers would say. Call it what you would, so the young man thought with a new hardness in him, it was a savage game that men played back there in the narrow streets of the great City. The counters of that game were the lives of men and women and children — their bread and their hopes and their happiness.

But if one were to play the game, at least he should have the courage to face the cards. With a pitiless feeling of contempt for the fearful banker alone in his private office within the great building, the young man travelled northward on the swift express in search of Alexander Arnold.

XI

PARADISE VALLEY

Who has not heard of Paradise Valley? That estate of Alexander Arnold, an hundred thousand acres and more, covering square miles of hills and meadows with lakes and mountain brooks, game preserves, fish hatcheries, dairy farms, nurseries, orchards, — in short every appurtenance of a modern principality? Begun as a simple country home in the hills beyond the smoke and the roar of the City, in the days when Arnold's name meant nothing to the popular mind, it had grown of late years apace with its master's wealth and fame. Farm after farm, entire villages with their homes and stores and churches, had been swallowed up by the great one in his land hunger. The old north highway had been turned aside, country roads abandoned, ancient rights of way closed to the public, at the suggestion of the estate superintendent and the will of Arnold. The country folk had made some feeble protest, loath to abandon their old homes, disliking the overlordship of One; but these had been silenced by money, or as a last resort by the cunning hand of the law.

At first the houses of a distant village had been visible from the great mansion on the hill, — disfigurement and ugly reminder of common humanity, although the mistress of Paradise Valley had been known to say that the white houses peeping through the leafy trees were "friendly." But something there is in power which demands isolation, and so the bounds of the populous world had been pushed ever farther away from the inner privacy of Paradise Valley, until now it

was a good three miles from the private station at the edge of the estate to the Hall. . . .

When Hugh Grant descended from the train that May evening, the only person to be seen was a man engaged in loading supplies into a light wagon, to whom he turned for guidance. The servant from the great house considered the stranger with suspicion, and referred him to the stone structure across the way through the fortlike flanks of which ran a broad road. Another parley here, consultation at the telephone within, and at last the young man was allowed to enter the domain. The man with the wagon overtook him, but did not offer the empty seat beside him. Hugh, accustomed to the frank hospitality of the country road, wondered at the churlishness of the great man's servant, and walking on beside the wagon remarked upon the high brick wall through which they had just passed.

"There's more'n twenty mile of it—and all as high as that," the man answered with a strange touch of pride.

"But what for?" the young man questioned, glancing again at its mediæval bulk and gloomy height.

"To keep out people, of course. They don't want 'em poking about the woods and farms."

"At this distance from the City, you can't be troubled with many intruders."

"Think so! They'd come down here by the train load and camp all over the place if it weren't for those walls and the guards."

"The guards?"

"The keepers. There's twenty-five of 'em, and they do nothing but ride about the estate all day to see that nobody gets in, — lights fires or disturbs the game."

Hugh pondered this first lesson of his journey, which was destined to be fruitful of enlightenment. The road wound through a thick forest of young poplar and maple beside a clear

full stream. It was the end of May, and the small new foliage of the forest trees cast pleasant shadows upon the broad road and flecked the brown water in the stream. Occasionally at the opening of the forest, which skilfully simulated virgin wildness, the descending sun made a golden film. At first the way led up the stream, then crossed a broken country and passed a large, still pond, on the further side of which rose a gray building.

"Mill?" Hugh questioned.

"Fish hatchery, sir," the servant, who had kept beside him all this time, answered with scorn. "Supplies all the streams of the estate, and they sell what they can't use. A million or more of trout fry and hundreds of thousands of bass and other sort."

The road ran on, broad and beautifully graded, through some old woods of gnarled oak and young plantations of fir, passing a picturesque dismantled mill where a hoary water-wheel was still turning. Once a deer looked up from a cool glade which they were crossing.

"There was a village here once, sir," the man remarked proudly. "That's all there is to it now!" He pointed to a dismantled mill below, and the ivy-hung chimney of a ruined cottage. It was another and startling proof of the might of his master that Arnold could turn a living village into a forest glade where wild deer fed at their ease.

The road now gradually rose, and crossing a gorge upon a stone-arched bridge, climbed the farther hillside in a long curve. At last the man pointed with his whip up the open valley, just revealed, to the mansion that crowned a terraced rise between the hills.

"That's the Hall, sir." With a last suspicious glance the servant drove off into a by-road, much to the relief of the young man.

At this point a gentle valley opened between two ridges of

sheer hills that were thickly covered with a deciduous growth of forest, now softly leaved in early green. Through the level meadow of the valley the stream up which he had come flowed downward to the fish-ponds below. And at the farther end of the valley upon an abrupt spur of the eastern hillside rose the great house.

The young man standing in the soft light of the spring sunset gazed intently upon the scene. He never forgot that first view of Paradise Valley. The sun, just falling athwart the green slopes of the western hills, illuminated the long, irregular stone house with a still radiance. It seemed from the lower end of the valley where he stood, immeasurably removed and distant, although not more than a mile away. But at the twilight hour, when for the moment the very birds were hushed and no human figure was in sight, this solitary mansion set aloft in isolation and silence, like the hall of a primeval lord, was singularly unreal. In spite of the loveliness of the forest-clad hills and the soft light of the setting sun, a chill crept unconsciously into the heart of the young man — a chill of loneliness and remoteness from the human world, dampening the ardent spirit within him. It quenched for a little his buoyant joy in the country and the recreating spring and his sense of venture. . . . Soon he strode out on his way, pushing aside the twilight chill, listening for the call of a bird, the sound of a voice from some laborer in the meadows. But nothing broke the perfect calm of Paradise Valley. A little while before — but a few hours — he had been moving through the crowded City with its reek of the living, its harsh voice. That seemed friendlier, more appealing, than the lonely beauty of this silent valley.

With his eyes upon the lofty house, he followed the curves of the road winding up the spur of the hill. There before him, he felt, lay a chapter of destiny. Alone, solitary, at nightfall, he was approaching it. His spirit flowed back once more

to meet the coming fate, small or great, that should be offered — the life beyond.

Out of the thicket by the roadside rose the mellow notes of a thrush, liquid, pathetic, — beauty and sorrow inwoven together. His heart thrilled by the musical voice, he looked upwards with serious, questioning face. There on the broad terrace above, buttressed upon heavy masonry, was gathered a little group of men and women. He hastened his steps along the winding road which was carefully hidden from the house until a last sweep brought him in full face of the western terrace and the people. At his approach the gay voices fell as if the company were regarding him with unfriendly speculation, perhaps taking him for a servant who had missed his way to the proper entrance. At a glance he discovered the master of the house standing by the parapet, and by his side was a tall white woman with a sweeping plumed hat. "The one that the Anarch said," thought Hugh, approaching the two, who were somewhat apart from the others. Arnold was bare-headed, and his thick hair had grown whiter these last years, but the deep brown eyes had all their searching power that Hugh so well remembered.

"What do you want?" the old man demanded with cold scrutiny. They were the very words that he had used that other time, grimly repelling possible demand. Hugh smiled at the recollection.

"I come from Mr. Whiting," he replied. "I was sent to find you — there is trouble in the Bank."

At these last words the handsome woman at Arnold's side looked at him furtively from childish blue eyes. The old man turned leisurely and led the way across the terrace, motioning Hugh to follow. Here, thought the young man, noting the calm, assured step before him, is one who would not flinch before danger. If the flood should come and wipe from the earth Paradise Valley and all within it, he would not cry out. Not if the City itself should crack and be consumed!

They passed through a mullioned door into a small room prepared for business. Arnold closed the door, and wheeling said interrogatively: —

“Well?”

“Mr. Whiting told me I was to find you if possible and communicate with him.” The brown eyes studied the young man without a sign of emotion. “He is much disturbed —” A trace of a smile might be seen about the curves of the white mustache, and Hugh added hastily, — “There is serious trouble, sir, the National Deposit — panic —”

He stopped. “He knows all,” Hugh thought. Yes, he knew all — before Whiting — before it happened! This day when he could not be found, when he was riding about the country with the large white woman — it was all no accident. And chilled to silence, he waited before the impassive face.

“Mr. Whiting told you this?”

“Yes.” And he stammered in explanation, “Mr. Whiting is very anxious.”

The smile deepened, then abruptly disappeared.

“How many people have you talked with since you left the bank?” he demanded harshly.

The same fear of possible publicity, of betrayal, that the banker had shown!

“I do not talk about other people’s affairs,” the young man replied bluntly. “But the newspapers have it already.”

The brown eyes still rested upon him thoughtfully while with one thin hand Arnold stroked his mustache.

“A good habit that, not to talk,” he murmured dryly; “not common . . . Mr. —?”

“Grant — Hugh Grant.”

“Hugh Grant,” the old man repeated, and his brows contracted slightly, as if some cross current had disturbed his train of thought. “Mr. Grant, you may telephone Mr. Whiting that you have found me,” — he motioned to the instrument

on the table, — “and you may say that I shall be glad to see him here to-morrow at luncheon — say that some gentlemen are lunching here with me.”

Hugh bowed. As he was about to leave the room, Arnold turned and remarked casually, “You will stay with us over Sunday, Mr. Grant.” It was said rather as command than invitation, and Hugh merely bowed a second time. “You may be of assistance — my secretary happens to be away.” He left the room. Hugh thought, “He is afraid — thinks it better that I should not leave until after the event, whatever it may be!” For a moment he resented the imputation, thought to exhibit his personal independence by hastening away, his message delivered. But while he held the telephone his pettish mood disappeared; the desire to press farther on this curious venture overcame his pride.

For during those few moments face to face with Alexander Arnold, the younger man knew surely that nothing was unexpected, nothing unforeseen by this man. The crisis that had unnerved the banker had long been known to him. Even, it was possible, it had all been arranged to be as it was. For Panic, he knew, was also a weapon in the hand of power. On the morrow, then, at a gentleman’s country party, the fate of the Bank of the Republic and of all those bound up with it, the fate of the National Deposit and of all those similarly bound in with it, the fate of other banks, companies, individuals, would be decreed. It was an act of power that thrilled his blood.

“So you found him!” Whiting’s voice quivered over the long line with nervous tension. “Thank God!” As he replaced the instrument, Hugh’s lips curved grimly. The other one at least had the courage of a man!

The deft servant, disturbed at the young man’s garmentless state, would have done his best to make him presentable with borrowed clothes, “Master Morris’s things, sir!” But

Hugh waved him aside. An unbidden guest and forced to remain, he would appear in his own person.

There was no one in the lofty hall when he descended, and he looked about idly at the many pictures. At one end, in a niche by itself, softly lighted by hidden lamps, was a painting that glowed with mellow color. It was a famous Italian altarpiece recently acquired by Arnold at great price, and there had been complications in its surreptitious rape from its native land that had already given it wide celebrity. But of this gossip Hugh Grant was ignorant. His eye had been caught by its rich color, the lovely figure of a woman in the background of the composition, standing with a regal air beside a rich table.

"Yes, father —"

The voice came from a distance, — leisurely, contralto; it stirred an old memory of a voice heard before, — clear and melodious and silvery. He looked up, but seeing no one, turned again to the picture.

"You have found our new treasure, I see. . . . Isn't she adorable?"

The voice was at his side, and he saw a young woman, who had come silently up to him. She was dressed in white with bands of gold about her waist and bosom, and a gold wreath in her yellow hair. And as his startled eyes caught full the smiling face, the figure in white and gold, another echo came to him of a memory long past and overlaid, and his lips murmured silently, "Alexandra!"

"You need more light — here!"

She took a lamp from the table and stood near the picture, holding the light above her head so that its beams would fall upon the depth of the painting. The radiance from the lamp shone upon her smiling face as well as upon the golden tints of the old picture. It seemed as if the woman of the picture, so splendidly alive,

so full of emotional fire, were close akin to the living creature standing beside him, the lamp raised above her head! Many times afterwards when he felt the peculiar glow radiated by this living woman, — her warm enthusiasm for life, — he would think of her likeness to the golden woman upon the old canvas.

"I love her!" she exclaimed. The joyous lilt of her silvery voice was the master note of her being. There must be so many things in this rich world that she loved! "There is a romance to that picture — a tale of intrigue and war." She sketched the troublous history, — how it was called into being at the command of a young princess in a little Italian state, done for her by the artist of her choice, who was supposed to be her lover and who had painted the vivid being of his mistress into his altarpiece; how then for long generations it had rested in its place above the shrine where the princess worshipped the Madonna; then was raped by a conqueror to adorn his palace, restored to its native land only to be raped once more by a fresh spoiler with the subtle might of money. "They say," she concluded, replacing the lamp upon the table, "that we must send it to the Museum. But I like her too much and can't spare her — yet. . . . Isn't the chain of pearls splendid? And the glance from those eyes — as if she saw everything in the world!"

"And wanted it," Hugh added gravely.

"Of course!"

Her hand played softly over the polished surface of a finely chased box that lay upon the table, the pretty toy of some other long-dead princess. At her breast, clasping the strands of the gold chain, shone a large emerald, set in a quaint cluster of small diamonds and worn gold — also a precious spoil from the past, glowing for the daughter of the present.

Hugh was thinking of the girl with the torn riding-skirt sitting on a boulder by the roadside. Out of that chrysalis

had sprung this splendid butterfly! . . . She turned from him to others as the guests assembled, and he knew that she did not remember as did he their first encounter.

At dinner light conversation crackled about the broad board to the accompaniment of the leaping fire in the great fireplaces at either end of the long room. It was a small party for Paradise Valley, a dozen or more guests, and Hugh, subdued by the unfamiliarity of the scene, studied the faces around him, trying to place them in the drama of the occasion. The lawyer Talbot he knew, — plump and flushed of face, devoted seriously to his food; and Senator Dexter, at Alexandra Arnold's right, — with a gentle, fine face, — was also of those who frequented from time to time the inner offices of the Bank of the Republic. Not far from the Senator sat a handsome, middle-aged man with a deferential air, partly gray, of Olympian youth, nevertheless, with an accustomed manner of suave amiability. He was that famous president of the university, Nathaniel Butterfield, under whose skilful hand the institution had waxed strong in gifts and the friendship of the great. His duty to the university, so Hugh had gathered from the Professor's talk at the Venables', was to maintain terms of intimacy with the rich and the powerful of the land, "who," he would say facetiously, "have become our only real outcasts!"

"And what do you hear from our boy Morris?" Hugh heard him inquire of his hostess in a caressing voice.

"His last address was Teheran, was it not, father?"

The old man emitted a scarcely audible grunt.

"Absorbing Asiatic railroads, I suppose?" the plump lawyer inquired.

"Absorbing goat's milk and Persian poetry," Alexandra laughingly retorted.

"Well, well, he will come back to us some day, all the better

for his wanderings among strange peoples," President Butterfield remarked soothingly, aware of that common cross which the rich suffered with their offspring.


"So interesting, that!" piped a strange treble voice. It was from the white woman who had been Arnold's companion on the terrace. "How I should like to soar up into the sky and decide just what spot on the whole earth I would drop into for a taste of experience!"

Hugh had an odd vision of this large blonde creature in a black gown, spotted with precious stones, soaring far from solid earth. Her opulent flesh had a peculiar dead tint, and her small eyes were of the deepest azure. She had a thin piping voice that rose to a tiny laugh at the close of her speech.

"You like experiences, Mrs. Rickers?" Alexandra observed, and there was a crystal hardness in her silvery voice, as if of the many lovable things in the broad earth this woman was not one. Hugh felt that the daughter must know the common rumor which concerned the broker's wife and Alexander Arnold. For this was the beautiful "Conny" Rickers, who was busily making fortune for her new husband.

By her side was a glittering youth, who, it could be gathered, was the Senator's son, destined for diplomacy, and midway at the table sat a dark-faced man with black mustache, — the broker Rickers. . . . From the caprices of the wandering Morris the dinner talk drifted lightly off to realms of horticulture and sport, and then to art. Another famous painting had come into the European market, and Arnold was expected to slip across the ocean some day and "secure it for us," as the university president happily phrased it.

So they talked art and flowers, and the young stranger listened while deft servants brought and removed the food with brisk despatch, and the long meal languidly drew to a close. It was all performed with a hidden skill, a neat



perfection, like the care of the woods, the farms, the preserves of the great estate. This Paradise Valley was the embodiment of organization, — what Butterfield might call “the efficiency of the executive mind.” Thus Hugh realized the emphasis placed by the rich upon the perfection of little things, especially those that touched the body or had to do with personal expression. Towards the end of the meal, as if to cover the growing heaviness and ennui of the party, the organ in the hall was played, and a gentle, rolling melody filled all lapses of thought and speech.

Afterwards some sat at cards. Alexander Arnold took the broker’s wife to a distant room to examine special treasures. The plump lawyer told his stories, while the men puffed meditative rings of smoke toward the gilded ceiling. The university president soon slipped away to join Alexandra. He was a widower, and still had Olympian youth, with its wild dreams of eminence. Oh, marvellous Nathaniel!

And Hugh Grant also watched the fair-haired Alexandra from a distant corner, as she was surrounded by her little court of men. In this new atmosphere of conquest and possession, he too was stirred to strange dreams. . . . Alexandra, perceiving the young man’s intent gaze, his silent aloofness, made place for him near her, and bade him with her eyes to join her court.

“You must ride with us to-morrow,” she said graciously, “and see the place.”

He laughed as he answered, “But I have not yet learned to ride!”

“Too bad,” she said quite simply, “for there are some lovely spots among the hills.”

“I must walk to see them.”

“It is so dull to walk.”

The little words seemed to say much.

From the balcony outside his room he looked forth upon

the starry May night. The feathery trees on the hillside waved gently in the soft air that was drawing down the valley. On the morrow, within this lonely mansion between the hills, there was to be a council of war, he knew. To-night how still it was! Far removed from the bustle of life! There was silence, he felt, but not peace, at Paradise Valley.

XII

OVER FIELDS AND MOUNTAINS

IN the deep stillness of the great house he slept restlessly upon his soft bed, and awoke to the yellow light of early dawn. The blazing ball of the sun peered over the eastern hillside, throwing a long, dazzling beam into his eyes. It might have been the beacon from the *Success* watch tower that had so often disturbed his dreams. But instead of the rumble of drays through the city streets, bird notes sounded from the green hillsides, calling him to come forth into the morning. He dressed and found his way through the hushed corridors out of the sleeping house. Not even a servant was to be seen about the great hall and drawing-rooms where the treasures of painting and marble rested in the stillness of death. For in obedience to the habits of the masters, the world of service would not begin to revolve for some hours.

As he stole from the great house, with its windows close shuttered against the intrusive light of day, his spirit leaped with a peculiar exultation of freedom. In the flooding beauty of the dawn he had escaped the complexity of man's life, — not merely the organized luxury of Paradise Hall, but the sordid part of himself that had grown these last years. Turning soon from the gravelled path he scrambled up the eastern hillside, shaking the dew from the weedy underbrush that trembled at his touch. Careless of direction, desiring to lose himself in the wild, he rambled on aimlessly through the woods, threading brambly copses, surprising a deer at a pool, now following a cool trout stream, and rousing a flock

of pheasants that lazily betook themselves from his path. These wild things that he met seemed impudently indifferent to his appearance, as if the sense of protection had affected even their wild hearts. Like the servants, they had been removed from the common perplexities of existence, and knew that they belonged to an order of things quite other than that outside the walled bounds of Paradise Valley!

The sun had dried the dew and shot warmly into the coverts before he thought to turn back, and then he was at a loss for direction. In the remote part of the estate that he had reached he might wander for hours, perhaps the entire day, without meeting a human being or crossing a travelled path. At last, recalling that from the ridge behind him he had seen a wreath of blue smoke — sign of habitation — he retraced his steps, and presently he came to a rough road, with turfed furrows, washed by the spring streams. This, he argued, must be one of those abandoned thoroughfares, already almost erased from the earth, and would lead out of the woods. He walked rapidly down the winding road for some space, then paused in doubt. He heard the clatter of hoofs coming towards him at a lively pace, and on the crest of the little hill appeared a horse in full gallop with a woman on his back. The horse shied at the seated figure, and Alexandra Arnold quickly pulled him in. Hatless, breathless, her tumbled hair flecked with the bright sunlight, she was glowing with life. She nodded a friendly greeting.

"You have been tasting the morning, also!" she exclaimed, reaching out her free hand to him. As she leaned slightly down from her seat, the smiling face and shining eyes seemed those of the girl he had met on the roadside with the torn skirt. And his unbuttoned coat and waistcoat, his muddy shoes and damp brow, gave him the look of the rough wayfarer.

"Yes! I have been wandering about — *I'm* lost this time, and," he added with a whimsical smile, "you have the horse!"

To her puzzled look he explained, "You don't remember that other time? It was years ago, when you were a girl. You took your father's nag without permission, and he threw you. . . . You were sitting on a rock by the road when I found you —"

A light broke over her perplexed face, and she smiled eagerly.

"So *you* were the young man! And that's why your face seemed familiar."

"The name of the horse was Max. We all went to the ball-game."

"Oh, I remember — and the Academy won!"

"Do you also remember our dispute — how you lectured me?"

"I?"

"You! I've often thought of what you said that afternoon. The matter puzzles me still."

"The sporting instinct, wasn't it? I was all for the Academy, and you didn't care which side won."

There was a smiling challenge between them, as if the childish difference still lay just beneath the surface of their present selves, — strong and full of completed youth as they were.

"Does it still trouble you?" she asked teasingly.

"Oh, at times — rarely," he replied, a frown gathering unconsciously on his clear brow. "Life doesn't let you speculate much: you do the next thing that comes along!"

"Exactly! And it's always something bigger and better worth doing than the last!"

"Not always. Not every day is a triumph."

There was a smiling pause between them.

"You still believe in winning," he remarked.

"Of course — and you do also," she said lightly.

"Otherwise I should not be here?" he suggested crudely.

"It was an accident, you know. I came on an errand."

She made no reply to this speech, merely looked at the handsome youth with grave eyes as if wondering about him. Suddenly she put out her hands, touching him lightly on the shoulders, and leaped to the ground. He took the bridle of the horse, and they walked slowly on side by side.

"Like the other time," she suggested.

"Only you were a girl, then," he corrected. "Nothing is ever repeated."

"No — but there are pleasant reminders!" . . .

Soon they came upon a little cottage in the turn of the road, — one of the former farmhouses that had lent itself to the picturesque designs of a gentleman's estate, and thus escaped destruction. To the old man seated before the door Alexandra called: —

"Good morning, Andy! Making flies?"

"Ay!" the old Scotchman replied, and then with a wave of his hand beckoned the two to him. "Do you see that?" He held up the shiny silvery thread with which he was fastening some trout flies. "And do you ken what that is?"

"It's catgut, isn't it?" the young woman replied, taking a strand in her fingers.

"Not catgut!" the Scotchman exclaimed with disdain.

"Fine silver wire," Hugh suggested.

"Nor yet silver wire!" the old man said, his eyes beaming. "It's out of the body of a worm. And it's stronger than any wire could be. Break the bit with your two hands!"

Alexandra strained the silvery thread until it cut into the flesh, but it did not break. Hugh picked up another strand, slightly coarser, and with a jerk it parted.

"And that's the dee-ference," the old man explained with a triumphant nod. "That the gentleman broke is domestic, — out of the American worm. The other is made in Chiny from the Chiny worm."

He explained the tensile quality of various silks, then led them to a room in the cottage where he had some silkworms. From one of the jars he took a fat worm, cut it, and began to "draw" the tiny filament from the body of the worm.

"And nine yards of that in one worm!" he said. "It's a Chiny worm, that one — see how fine and firm the thread is. Now I ask mesel why the American worm can no do the like? It must be the food. So I'm experimentin'. I've got some American worms in those cages." He pointed to a row of cages where the silkworms were scattered among leaves. "They're powerful greedy eaters, too — it keeps me busy feeding them."

They watched the tiny creatures curled along the leaves.

"Now there's one strange thing," the old man continued, in a musing tone. "I could no find right males for my females hereabouts, and so I hung the cages out o' door the night, and in the morning — see there!"

He showed them a cage suspended from the limb of a tree outside, on whose filmy cloth covering several large moths were clinging. "Last night I hung that out, and this morning there were five large beauties of the same kind sticking to the cloth. I never before saw one of the kind in these parts, and I never heard of their being here. Now I'd like to have you tell me, how did they find the way?"

The old man's voice was eager with his pleasure in the mystery. Alexandra laughingly exclaimed:—

"So they came from afar to find their mates?"

"Ay, miss — over fields and mountains."

"Something called them here."

The beauty of the primal law in this chance illustration touched the woman. Educated in the modern way to full knowledge of sex mystery, she had no shame in presence of the law, — so wonderful and beautiful, — and as the two

left the old man's cottage and resumed their road through the young forest, she murmured softly: —

"Through the forest, across the fields, and over the hills they came — to find their mates."

"A great force drew them — one of the two master forces in life."

"And the other?"

"The other is everywhere," the young man replied vaguely, gazing across the expanse of meadow with the dark line of the meandering stream, to which their road had brought them. High at the upper end of the valley Paradise Hall rose with gable and tower toward the blue heavens. "This — the spirit of possession, of conquest, of triumph!"

A little smile came into the woman's face as he touched once more upon the theme of their youthful difference.

"And *this*," she said lightly, "is very good, I think!"

"For those that possess."

"Some must always possess, — the strong!" she observed coldly.

"And some must always be possessed — the weak?" he asked.

"I suppose so. It is the law — the other law."

She nodded with smiling affirmation, and reaching for the bridle prepared to mount.

"I must leave you here and hurry home. My father is expecting some men for luncheon, — some of the strong!" she added with a touch of malice, as the young man awkwardly helped her to mount. Waving farewell, she was speeding up the smooth roadway at full gallop, her head erect, a smile upon her curving lips, a figure of gleaming life and beauty in the morning sunlight.

The air was sweet with the gladness of spring. The tender thickets beside the road were loud with the hum of growing life. And yet the meaning of it, the vivid joy of it all, seemed

to have left the young man with the vanishing presence of this woman. Hugh turned aside as a swift motor shot by him. In the solitary figure within of a little man wrapped in fur, he recognized that child marvel of finance, — Michael Peter Ravi. So Arnold's party was beginning!

XIII

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS

THE visitors were arriving. As Hugh drew near the house, he could see the powerful cars circle rapidly around the drive up the hill. Soon on the western terrace a lively party was assembled, into which the young man slipped without note.

These princes of the day, laughing, chatting, exchanging greetings, had a jovial air about them. Solid, fresh-colored gentlemen, scrupulously dressed, they had met on this bright Sunday morning seemingly for a party of pleasure. Hugh wondered whether the excitement in the City, the cry of alarm, that had spurred him on his journey to Paradise Valley, were but the hysterics of the street. Even Whiting, who was telling an elaborate story to Senator Dexter, seemed to have recovered his ruddy poise, in this atmosphere of confident power. Perceiving Hugh, he beckoned to him, and with that amiable cordiality which made him liked by many, he presented the young man to Senator Dexter, then to Ravi, and others, who nodded sociably. . . . "Much obliged to you, Grant," the banker whispered. "Thought you would stay over?"

"Mr. Arnold wished it."

"Indeed."

"How are things — the Bank?" Hugh ventured.

The serious look settled down on Oliver Whiting's pleasant face.

"The Bank is safe," he replied curtly.

"And the National Deposit?"

"Ah, that is another matter! I can't say—it is a mixed situation." He began to speak of other affairs, as if the young man had committed an indiscretion. But Hugh knew why he had lost the ashen look of the day before. In the coming storm he and his would be taken care of. Whatever might betide the National Deposit and "the other crowd," *he* should be saved. The reputation he had built up for public admiration would remain intact.

"Have you seen the new Velasquez?" Whiting inquired kindly. "It's a very remarkable work. There are many celebrated pictures in this house, you know. But the best things are kept in the City, naturally—ah, Ravi, one moment." Ravi, who was discussing cosmetics with the broker's wife, turned with a bored air to the banker. The university president took his place with the large, blonde woman, and the young man overheard the two catalogue the party, enumerating their names and positions.

"What do you suppose it all means?" piped the lady in her childish treble.

President Butterfield gravely shook his head.

"A business crisis, I am afraid. There are serious times ahead. Of course the country is sound, but possibly as a people we are overenthusiastic—yes, a trifle in a hurry." He looked benevolently at the broker's wife, who studied him out of her little blue eyes. "A crisis"—and what did that mean, pray! Every one knew that for months the great world gamble had been in full dizzy sweep. The broker had reaped his harvest, and now—the woman with the childish voice and the little blue eyes knew more about business than the worldly Butterfield. Now, in the hour of peril, when some must suffer and fail—who were to be the victims? That, it was her desire to find out. Not these men surely. They would save themselves, at least. . . .

The note of gayety grew louder with luncheon. Laughter

and high voices and the light tones of women, jest and story and flirtation, filled the room. The rich food and the abundant wine fed the pulses and flushed the faces of men and women. With keen appetites gained in the open air, these men of power feasted as if that were their one end. A mood of wonder gained the young man. Could these men treat life so lightly? And he saw that the rule of this world was to hide its feeling, its purpose, its will — until the opportune moment.

While coffee and liquors circulated in the great hall, the men gathered about Alexandra Arnold, and vied in sallies to attract attention. Dexter, and Ravi, and Oliver Whiting were of the little court around her chair — the men of power, the strong that she had praised. And seeing her thus in the circle of men, Hugh envied them, with a swift desire to be there at her side. . . .

Arnold made a move, and the elegant Michael Peter relinquished his seat beside the hostess with a shrug that said, — “This imbecile finance!” (He voted, so Hugh learned later, thumbs down upon the question — ruthless Peter!) Thus with cigars lighted, flushed with food and drink, these gentlemen withdrew into Arnold’s private rooms. And Hugh, left with the women and the non-combatants, such as the college president and the broker, the Senator’s son who was destined for “something in diplomacy,” and an English amateur of the fine arts, wished that he might be with the others in Arnold’s lofty library and listen to the debate of “those who know.”

Presently the younger group disappeared on some party of pleasure. Butterfield and the broker with Grant strolled out to view the stables, the garage, and other appurtenances of the great house. Butterfield and the broker examined with enthusiasm the exquisite arrangement of these offices, tarrying to watch the swift revolution of the compound engines that supplied power for the estate.

"I like always," said the college president, "to see one of these engines at work. It represents efficiency, power without waste! That is the keynote of our highly organized modern civilization."

The broker whistled. Hugh thought of the council now being held in the great house on the hill, and the panic threatened because of riotous speculation in the materials of this civilization.

"Power," Butterfield resumed, "wherever found commands respect — the man who can *do* something!" He looked gravely at the young man, as if questioning his power, his percentage of efficiency.

"Or make the other fellow think he can do something," the broker added jocularly, from the depths of his popular wisdom.

When they had regained the terrace, over which the light fell sunnily, Nathaniel Butterfield stretched himself luxuriously in a long chair, and lighting another large cigar crossed his nicely booted feet in repose. Gazing upon the manorial acres of Paradise Valley, he resumed his leisurely monologue: —

"A wonderful place this! The creation of less than a dozen years. The magician waved his wand, and lo! this came into being, all organized and equipped as if its creator and his ancestors had lived here for a thousand years. There is your example of Power, of Efficiency."

"That's the way Arnold does things," the broker added, looking interestedly at the wing within whose walls so much was happening that might be of marketable use on the morrow.

"Such men," continued the president, focussing his gaze on the tip of his admirably burning cigar, "are great reservoirs of energy, concentrating in themselves the force of millions of ordinary beings to be expended with terrific effect for good or ill when discharged through them."

"He makes an impression all right," said the broker, flick-

ing his cigar ash in the direction of the room where that vessel of energy, Alexander Arnold, was at present in function. The college man continued in what might be called the informal lecture tone: —

“There is much popular misinformation as to the usefulness of such men. It is undeniable, the importance to our time of the concentration of energy like Arnold’s. Take merely this vast estate. With our system of popular government, how could such an example of perfect landscape art, of baronial magnificence, exist, if not for the genius of men like Alexander Arnold? Not to speak of his great gifts to the public in art and education.”

The broker smiled, remembering the two millions of dollars that had recently been obtained for the university by the gentleman at his side.

“And in the matters of industry, I take it the same magnificent concentration of control is a necessary step in human progress.”

“It’s come to stay,” the broker assented.

Hugh, realizing that all which was expected of him was respectful silence, held his peace.

“Did you ever hear,” Butterfield asked in a confidential tone, “our host’s early history?”

“From somewhere in the South, wasn’t he?” the broker observed.

“Yes — from the mountain region. His family lived in one of those little hamlets hidden away among the mountains a hundred miles from a railroad. One of those families that we are accustomed to regard as degenerate, although springing from old English stock. I have heard of that one-room cabin beside a little stream where Mr. Arnold lived with father, mother, and eight brothers and sisters — in one room, just think!”

The sleek Nathaniel shivered at the picture. In the cottage

of Nathaniel's father, the Reverend Cyrus Butterfield, there had been three rooms, always, and only a discreet four in the family.

"It shows that nothing can prevent the advance of real power! About the time of the war Arnold had got to the settlements and was trading mules with the Northern army. Shortly after the war he had capital enough to make a lucky investment in some timber lands on which coal was discovered. That led him naturally into railroads, transportation. From that time, it has been the old story, one thing after another, until now —" Butterfield waved his handsome hand vaguely toward the mansion.

"He's always stuck to staple articles," the broker added: "first timber and coal, then iron, and always transportation."

"Including the mules," Hugh suggested.

"Phenomenal genius that creates opportunity!" and after enjoying the phrase, the college president continued, "He married, as a rather young man, — married the daughter of an old Virginia family, socially of course much his superior — the Jervis, you know! They were poor, destitute we may say, at the close of the war, and Arnold already had means. They say that Mrs. Arnold was a very beautiful woman — one can believe it from her children — and of a singularly sweet disposition — but sad, constitutionally depressed. After the family moved to New York this became melancholia: she had to be confined. I do not know to-day whether she be living or dead. . . . It explains things in Arnold, — his white hair, that coldness so often ascribed to him. There are sad pages in the history of the greatest! And then his children — Aleck Jervis, the oldest, was a handsome lad, much like his father, only larger in physique. He was under me at the university — in fact, I tutored him, and that is how I first came to know the family. But he was wild, quite wild, and freakish — may have inherited it from his mother's

family. Plenty of ability, but temperamentally unbalanced — like the mother."

"Where is he now?" the broker asked.

"Who knows? I doubt if his father does. They quarrelled, about a woman, I am told." His voice dropped to a discreet whisper. "It's said father and son loved the same woman — that was *his* weakness — and when Aleck found it out there were high words. The young man was romantic in his notions. . . . He's never been heard from since so far as I know. Some say he's dead. But I'm inclined not to believe that."

"There is the other boy," Hugh suggested, recalling the awkward youth at the baseball game.

"Ah, yes — Morris. He graduated from us — nice boy, but queer — they're all queer!"

"Except Miss Arnold," the broker suggested.

"Except Miss Arnold," Butterfield agreed, with a peculiar smile. "There's less of the mother in her. Morris is just freakish, you know. He sailed for New Zealand the day after he graduated — anthropological fad. His father fitted him out — something may come of it — it's well to have these wealthy families interested in scientific affairs."

"So the girl's the only one left," the broker summed up briefly. "And what's she goin' to do — marry a foreigner, I suppose?"

"Perhaps not, perhaps not," the college president murmured. "Miss Arnold has a good deal of her father's perspicacity — she may prefer an American of power."

"Like Whiting or Ravi," the broker suggested. "They seem to hang around her."

"Whiting is a plodder — nothing but a plodder," the college man remarked disdainfully. "Arnold put him where he is. Ravi is a different type. There is an instance," he turned to Grant, pedagogically, "to refute those who say

that modern life does not offer opportunity to men of ability. Ten years ago Ravi did not exist, so to speak, and now he is of the great company,"—he pointed significantly to the room beyond. "A Pole, he was beating the pavements, as the French say, a briefless lawyer. No one knows exactly how he got his foot upon the ladder, but in the period of railroad reorganization after the last panic he appeared in control of the Atlantic and Pacific, and from that time to this day he has been our most commanding figure in railroads."

"Smooth-looking little chap—he's got a knife in his boot all right!" the broker commented.

"Ah, there are the ladies at last!" Butterfield exclaimed, rising and throwing away his cigar. The act seemed symbolic of shaking off the broker and the young man. For President Butterfield, sociable and genial man as he was, never wasted himself upon the lesser when the greater were in sight.

"Where are all the others?" Mrs. Rickers piped in her childish treble.

"The council of the gods still continues," replied the college president homerically.

"What a way to spend this pleasant afternoon—all shut up in the house smoking and talking business!" piped Conny, prettily. Her husband clicked his boots. And presently, when the council of the gods broke up and the men emerged, chatting, their gay air subdued, Mrs. Rickers repeated her childish impertinence to Alexander Arnold, who smiled grimly. (The broker, however, left Paradise Valley that afternoon, and by means of the London cable made a famous "killing" in the early morning.)

Something in the air of these men,—the solemn face of Oliver Whiting, the bored pose of little Michael Peter, led Grant to divine the result. His chief whispered, "Very

serious — it is too late, I am afraid, to save the situation!" Which being interpreted, as Hugh could interpret it, meant in stark prose that the greater gods, being in a strong position, had resolved to allow the common people, together with certain lesser divinities, to run down the steep place into the sea. Grant looked over at the old man, who was toying with Conny Rickers, and he saw that this one at least had known from the beginning the fate of the National Deposit, the fate of all the unwary, the weak, and the helpless. For where would it end, this crack in the firmament of Prosperity?

The servants appeared with tea and whiskey. And thus went down the sun upon the Sabbath of the God of Mercy.

XIV

OF DEEDS AND THE MAN

TOWARD evening the gentlemen of the Sunday conference departed as they had come, singly or in twos and threes, by swift motors that sped them to their homes over the hills and by the fast express, specially halted at the private station for Arnold's guests. The sluggish broker, who, after a brief exchange of words with his wife, became alert and discovered urgent reasons for his return to the City, was one of the first to go. Hugh looked for the banker, who was closeted with the master of the house, and, somewhat loath, was preparing to leave Paradise Valley in the general drift when Alexandra stayed him.

"Why do you go now?" she asked. "Stay over — we shall have some music. The evenings are most beautiful —" She turned to another. So the young man remained, tempted, as youth would be tempted, not so much by the music and the beauties of Paradise Valley as by the desire to be even for a few more short hours near the beautiful woman who troubled his spirit.

And thus again by a woman's word and a bright look the curve of the future would be changed!

A quiet had settled upon Paradise Hall, as though the weight of the decision passed that day upon worldly matters had subdued all. In this quiescent twilight mood President Butterfield's gift for eloquent platitude shone. The broker's wife, who had been glancing at the day's news, exclaimed in her naïve treble: —

"They've got those miners out at last — after three weeks — and some of them are really alive!"

She read aloud the passage recounting the heroic resistance of the men entombed within the mine and the wonderful courage of their leader, a foreign laborer.

"What a man!" Alexandra murmured. "A hero!"

"The other day," said President Butterfield, "it was the story of an unknown sea captain who saved fifty drowning men and women at peril of his life. The world is full of heroes," he continued in his rich, reflective tone, "expectant of their hour. They say it is a material age, and yet nothing so stirs the blood of our people as the tale of some brave deed like this, some act of personal prowess. The love of deeds is keener than ever before in the history of the world. Our young men roam the earth in search of achievement, — the hunting of game, the taming of nature — fighting dragons wherever met."

"That is life," said Alexandra, simply, with dancing eyes.


Young Sylvester Dexter, who was destined for diplomacy, politely hid his yawn.

"'Tis the same story in science and invention," the university president persisted. "A resistless desire to accomplish. Ours is no longer the Elizabethan opportunity to explore an uncharted globe. Therefore we venture into the heavens. You see the civilized world a-tremble with excitement at the bold pilots who mount aloft in the sky, each one enlarging the sphere of human activity and interest."

"We are all going to fly some day," piped Conny Rickers.

"Business, I take it, has its fascination for most virile men because of the instinct for doing, — spur of accomplishment! It incites them to speculation, the conceiving of large enterprises, taking hazardous risks — the same love of deeds."

The banker Whiting nodded approvingly, — it was a thought he often made use of in his dinner speeches, — but



Alexander Arnold merely flicked the ash from his cigar. It seemed a symbolic act.

"And the great doers of our day," Butterfield persisted, "work less for their deserved reward than for the joy of doing. If the reward were a ribbon instead of money, these indomitable ones would still push to the goal. Payment is incidental — the symbol of triumph."

"Indeed!" said the broker's wife, doubtfully, and Arnold had the flicker of a smile.

"But I advise you not to forget the payment when you have a job to be done, doctor," the banker suggested jocularly.

Butterfield, who disliked the academic title, retorted sharply: —

"Doubtless for *some* there are no other rewards. But doing is the proper function of men. The only men admired by real women are the doers — not for the money they possess, but for their power!"

With this final touch of idealism he turned his handsome head toward Alexandra.

"I like men who do things," she said simply.

"We try to marry heroes," the broker's wife added.

"Precisely; women demand heroes, — doers. And as long as the world is what it is and women are what they are, men will respond with deeds to lay at their feet — industrial triumphs, deeds of munificent charity, venturesome deeds, — ah, the world is full of deeds!"

His modulated voice dropped into silence, and he lighted his cigar. The amiable man of learning had voiced the pagan creed of this world. It was voiced at Paradise Hall in a thousand subtle notes. Through the long windows which were open upon the terrace the moonlight fell. Outside it was a misty radiance of perfumed springtide, and from below, the river swiftly flowing over a pebbled reach

sounded musically in the night. The broker's wife paced the terrace between Arnold and the university president, turning her white neck slowly first to one; then the other, raising rhythmically her beautiful bare arms in the moonlight. Young Dexter lounged at the feet of Alexandra, telling tales of the far-off South American state from which he had returned. The moonlight fell upon her head, and stole over the old picture behind her, dimly revealing the glow of the painted canvas. Now and then the living woman raised her head, and with indrawn breath and fluttering smile looked out into the night.

Hugh leaned against the terrace wall, watching the silver shimmer of the river in the meadows, scenting the rose-laden air. Low tones of music floated from a distant room. The place spoke in many ways to the soul of the young man. Like another earth from the squalid streets of the City, the narrow places where his life had been set, Paradise Valley embodied beauty and harmony,—the creation of deeds. The creation of deeds! Thus the princes of the earth who could triumph in the fight expressed their wills.

A musical laugh came from Alexandra, who had risen and was standing in the full moonlight. Hugh turned away.

Accidentally he, the foundling, had strayed hither into the realm of power — unknown, without his certificate of deeds, mere stranger at the feast. Except for her, the woman, he would not have chafed at his lowness. But now, with a leap of hot pride, he said to himself that never again should he be there, until he too was equipped with deeds, and as an equal might cross the carpet before her. . . .

She was standing behind him in the night, — this splendid butterfly of Paradise Valley, waiting for that one — doer of magnificent deeds — to come over mountains and across fields, upon whom she would bestow herself, — the one most deserving of honor! So the hot youth would not even turn

Alexander Arnold looked impassively at the waiting people, and made no remark.

Not far beyond, another line crowded the pavement in front of the Bank of the Republic, but this line kept moving forward in regular form. The doors were not closed! Arnold and the banker quickly crossed the line and slipped into the bank.

And the young man knew in the depth of his heart that the dumb figures outside upon the pavement, waiting vainly in front of the National Deposit for the money that meant to them blood, — life itself, — were in some hidden manner linked to this old man who went before him into that inner shrine where the secret rites of finance were performed.

XV

THAT LARGER HORIZON

THEN the years passed, — one, two, three. And that stream of life so various, which has borne you and me upon its flood, bore also these creatures of God, — toward our unknown goal. . . .

Behold a new horizon for the foundling, Hugh Grant, and surely in its physical sweep of plain and mountain far wider than even the towered City from the window of the Anarch's chamber, or from the sanctum of Benjamin Gossom! At the farthest reach of the eye lies the rocky crest of great mountains, their pinnacles glittering purple and white beneath the morning sun, and nearer the bold, barren hills opening eastward to the rolling plains that lift and fall in limitless miles, crossed by the black line of railroad which cuts the earth from horizon to horizon. A few years before, this was all, — the purple peaks with their everlasting snow, the bare hills, the arid plain, and the river pushing an impulsive course through cañons from the mountains to the plain. Now, as Hugh stands beside the spur track waiting for the train from the East, he can see the rude streets of the "city" of Tomahawk, a thriving place sprawled between river and railroad. Over the bare hilltop behind the town the thin poles bearing the transmission lines of the Rainbow Falls Power Company shoot up out of the void and go galloping in a straight line across hill and valley and plain until they are lost in the gray distance. Thence southward for an hundred miles and more these threads of shining copper wire upon their steel

posts run like the flight of an arrow, feeding as they go smelters and mines and mills, feeding Power to men. The city of Tomahawk — and many another human ganglion — draws its life from these copper wires. It is what Gossom calls "the development of resources."

The copper wires sang a song of their own that pleasant summer morning, vibrating in the keen mountain wind while their glittering threads bore the precious current of life. A rancher on his rough pony came riding over the hill and paused before the transmission poles, looking wonderingly at their arrowlike flight across the open. Slowly he rode away towards the town. The copper wires sang the passing of his world, — the open spaces, the sky and the earth common for man and beast. Hugh looked at the rude figure. The copper wires sang a song for him, too, this beautiful morning, — a song of labor accomplished, and triumph. On the far eastern horizon a brush of black smoke stained the cloudless sky; he paced impatiently to and fro. . . .

Out of the stress of panic, the wreck of the National Deposit, had come this larger horizon. When the smoke of that disaster had cleared away, the Bank of the Republic, greater than ever, had in its vaults the débris of its rival. (Men said that Arnold and Whiting had conspired to this end, but none knew.) Among the litter of abortive undertakings, uncertain speculations, were the securities of this power company, — half done, bankrupt. So to the young man on whom Whiting looked with favor it fell to examine and report. He had had the divining eye, and the persuading voice; on his decisive demand capital had opened its purse to complete the huge dam across the cañon above Tomahawk, instal the machinery, and build the transmission lines. Some millions of gold it had taken, poured out upon the desert by the Bank of the Republic and its allies.

Now to-day the men who had ventured were coming to see

the deed done for them. For months the giant generators had been purring in their house, and the current of life had been flowing across the desert country. At last the harvest of his eager sowing was yielding its return, and the man was content. As he paced the ground beside the track and looked for the black brush upon the horizon, he had more than labor well performed to content him, more than liberal salary earned; he had the power of performance, and the "larger horizon." Magic-wise he had been wafted from the crowded streets to these wind-swept open places of the earth beneath the mountains, from the handling of paper symbols of power to the stuff of power itself. And power had bred power, subtly transmuting matter into spirit! It was a beautiful song that the copper wires sang that early summer morning.

The long train came to a halt, detached a car, and puffed away westward. The curtained car was without sign of life. At six in the morning, Hugh remembered, men of power were usually asleep! He waited. Presently a woman stepped forth upon the platform and looked out across the open upland to the mountains. It was Alexandra Arnold. With her hands clasped to her breast she gazed at that purple sky-line above the Rainbow Falls, her lips parted in a little sigh, and she murmured:—

"Ah!" Seeing the waiting man, she smiled welcome and said, — "Take me up there!"

"I will! — will you come?"

"What is that?" she demanded, pointing to the transmission lines.

"That is power!"

She looked at him examiningly, with an approving smile, and slowly said, breathing in the warm, rare air, "I like it!"

Presently the men of the party appeared, and the day's work began. They had come hither as for a pleasure party,

sweeping through the country in Ravi's car, flitting from spot to spot where their capital lay breeding. They were going to the railroad man's famous ranch in the mountains for fishing and hunting, a few weeks, then would swing back in another arc to examine railroad and mine. It was a princely tour of inspection.

So they looked at their property, examined figures, listened and questioned, and at last stood on the dam built with their money to snare the wild river.

"And where is this auxiliary storage you wrote of?" the banker inquired.

"Rainbow Lake, above the falls, there in the mountains," Grant replied.

He pointed to the lofty sky-line near the clouds.

"An inexhaustible supply!" he said.

"A long way off. . . . This country will never grow up to that," murmured some. The young man, to whom this plan was dear, answered the objectors and let fall the amazing figures of power lying dormant in that mountain lake fed by the snows. The banker listened with eager eyes. Nathaniel Butterfield, who loved these expeditions of private state, remarked happily:—

"You would harness the snows themselves!"

"The clouds," Grant corrected, pointing to the mighty backbone of the continent, against whose barriers the drifting vapors pressed. And as he described the natural reservoir that held the waters, and spoke of the industrial demands of the "city" of Tomahawk, the brown eyes of old Arnold rested thoughtfully upon the mountains. He had dealt with the substance of power all his life, in wood and coal and ore, the basic elements of things. Here at the feet of the lofty mountains, that dorsal column of an hemisphere, he saw another limitless realm of power, and the spirit of possession in his greedy soul was reaching out to control it with his consum-

ing desire for the basic matter of life. But it was Alexandra who spoke the word: —

"Take us up there to the snow!"

Thus half in jest at a woman's whim, the expedition was set on foot to penetrate that upper wilderness beneath the snow-beds of the mountains. On the surface a party of pleasure, but underneath there was purpose, hidden and ramifying remotely, in these men's minds. As they left the shanty confines of Tomahawk, the woman could laugh, but the men knew that here was the kernel of much life, — mines, and timber, mills, and land to be sown.

"Some day," the banker said, "we shall make this journey in your car, Ravi!"

Alexandra, riding ahead with Hugh Grant, murmured, "This is better!"

And the young man, brisk with the wine of the mountain air, his heart singing the song of coming triumph, happy beside the woman he loved, laughed and pointed upward to the white masses in the azure heavens.

"His railroad will never reach there!"

"But you will take *me* — up there to the very crest!" she announced confidently.

"Wherever you will!" he said.

Obedient man! She gave him the recompense due her servants, men — a quick smile, a warm glance of the eye. . . .

So from valley to valley they rode, and upwards ever nearer to the heart of the mountains they came. They camped at night among tall pines in silent meadows. Wild land, this, timbered and untracked, but the men of power observed its wealth. Here must lie roads to new realms. And they looked upon the young man Grant with favor, because he too had shown some of that divining instinct of the greater future to be. He was pointing where they might lay hands upon power. When the coal beneath the earth had been dug, when

the oil refused to flow, the clouds would still yield their vapor against the barriers of the mountains, falling in a mantle of snow over the peaks, sinking downward in water, again transforming through engines into energy, — heat and light and power, without which men could not live. And the old white-haired man, with the keen eyes looking about over the earth, said to himself, "And this also I will have, if it proves good, and this young man with the seeing eye shall be the finger of my hand in this matter." For this one planned as if life were to be forever, and all would come to him that he desired.

At last they reached that lake, — oval mirror of the mountains, fed by eternal snows, — exhaustless fount of power. Their camp-fires gleamed among the tall trees like the eyes of invading beasts, while overhead sailed the full summer moon, revealing the breasts of pure snows and the rivers of ice among the peaks of the mountains.

"Take me up there!" the woman ever urged, and so one gray morning the two slipped from the sleeping party for their venture.

Upward in the misty dawn, the moon setting over the shoulder of the mountain, they pressed their way around the dark lake — upward to the river of frozen snow that flowed between the peaks. When the sun rose, it spread behind them a broad, golden pathway over the white floor, gilding the woman against the glittering whiteness, touching her hair with glory. Her gray eyes shone exultantly.

"They still sleep there below. They will wonder whither we have flown over the mountains!" And stretching her arms to the rising sun, "The earth is ours — we are above it!"

There it lay beneath them, tremulous in the bluish dawn of day, the lesser hills dimpling away to the great plain.

"Thousands upon thousands of miles, clear across the land," he murmured.

"And up there?" her demanding gaze reached to the edge, sharp and white with drifting snow above.

"Westward and ever westward, to the other ocean!"

"Come!" she called. "To the roof of the continent, then!"

The stillness of dawn lay among the peaks, across the floor of snow. A bit of cloud floated slowly from the west, and circled about the topmost peak. They pushed on, two small atoms on this white floor. Alone! She was woman and he man. Nothing more. In that wide expanse of driven snow above the earth whither they had climbed, they were alike, stript of all differences, mere woman and man. The sense of their isolation filled the man with strange joy, and a smile upon the woman's face answered his look. For the time she was content to slip the complex inwoven web of circumstance, and be thus alone with him. . . .

They looked upward to the knife-edged drift, and slowly advanced, tracking the feathery, voluminous snow. At last they stood upon that edge, dividing the waters of the continent. Above, before, behind, the unbroken pack of snows, garnered year by year! Like sentinels sharp peaks of rock were set on every side of this field of snow.

"For miles unnumbered, — the reservoir of the gods!" He pointed to the vast snow-field.

"And this," she murmured, "is your seat of power!"

"Out of it shall come light and heat!"

She took some handfuls of the feathery stuff and let them sift through her fingers.

"Diamonds, and pearls, and topaz!"

"Your jewels shall be transmuted and will appear far down in the plain among men as the steady gleam of light, the rhythm of swift engines! See that jutting front of the mountains." He indicated the curving surface of the range. "That divides the waters. The mountains are like hands stretched into the heavens to gather the moisture that envelops the planet.

And down these steep ways between their shoulders the thing falls, until it meets our dams, and there is transformed again to be sent over the earth along a copper wire."

Her gray eyes flashed with the poetry of the theme.

"The sun and the cloud!"

"We strip the power from the heavens for man's use."

"Power," she mused with smiling lips, — "power, it is life!" Simple expression of the creed of her race, the words sounded in the stillness, — the words of an idle woman, — with a strange foreboding. A cloud cast a long shadow across the snow, and the air drew coldly out of the north. Glancing up at the gray bank already massing around the upper peaks, Hugh turned to descend.

"Come! We are due down yonder!"

The dimpled plain still lay in sunlight beneath them, undulating in valley and forest-covered hill. Venturesome, the woman peered around the edge of the mountain shoulder into a narrow valley.

"Look there," she cried exultingly. "That little oval lake is a jewel for a queen. Its color is onyx." And below lay a second glacier lake, all rimmed with thick green trees. "Emerald!" she named it. "And the third jewel, there in the valley, with a pebbly margin, — it is turquoise! A string of jewels upon the mountains. Come, get me my jewels!"

She leaped with the word down the steep slope of snow, and sliding, steadying herself with waving arms, threw back a challenge to him to follow. His startled call, "Alexandra!" was lost among the empty peaks. Her voice came up faintly from below, "Come with me!"

He plunged downward, and near the tiny lake overtook her. As they looked back up the steep side, the wind caught the edge of the drift; then there came a thundering sound of falling snow. The place where they had stood was buried beneath tons of the avalanche. To the woman's startled look,

Hugh replied gravely, "That way is closed. And this is the Valley of the Seven Peaks — unknown to me."

She repeated buoyantly, "At least, that way is closed. Therefore we shall find our way out here!"

They looked at each other, there in the narrow valley, hemmed in by precipitous rocks, the rampart above buried in its snowy burden, and below the three jewel-lakes one after another. Death stood upon that summit above where a few moments before they had lingered. And the woman's gray eyes, seeing death escaped by so little, became grave.

"I will follow you," she whispered.

"Then come, swiftly!" he exclaimed, taking her hand. His heart beat fast, as he strode on toward the unknown valley. "I will follow you," she had said! Oh, wonderful! Here between rock and rock, between gray cloud and snowy earth, she was but the woman and he the man. All else of eternity was lost. She was the woman and would follow, and he the man to lead.

Swiftly, silently, they sped downward to the little lake of onyx, at the border of the snows. There, panting, they rested until the first frozen drops of the storm stung their faces, warning them to be gone. Looking up into the grim face of the heavens above the snows, they hastened toward the next lake of the chain. This was set in a green meadow, but the turquoise color had faded from the water. Alexandra knelt beside the lake and drank. Brushing back her tumbled hair, she glanced at him radiantly.

"What a place to stay in!"

The snows above and the green forest beneath, this little pool in the midst of its green meadow between the sheer walls of rock.

"For life," he added.

She looked down into the still water where were mirrored the dark peaks. The misty dampness fell upon her hair like

diamond points. . . . Two, sheltered by the rocky walls, forever hid from the world — it was a dream — the woman smiled.

Docilely she followed his swift pace to the third lake, which was girt by old forest-trees, growing stout and lofty in the marshy ground, tapering upward toward the lowering sky. The rain now fell steadily.

"We must not wait," he urged, as she would linger to bathe her arms and hands in this, the last of the jewel-chain. "I do not know where we are — where this valley leads. It may be a long journey out."

She smiled confidently, saying, "We shall find our way."

He studied the marching clouds on the peaks above, and then sought the little stream that flowed from the lake among the trees. This must be their way downward, following the water until it reached the river.

"We must save your strength — we do not know the end."

"Don't think of me!" But in a moment, "Oh, I am so hungry!" she remarked, with the wonder of a child.

The man replied carelessly, "A good appetite for dinner." But he considered the likelihood of night overtaking them before they had escaped from the winding valley. A shelter beneath one of these watersoaked firs — it was impossible.

The rain fell persistently. Mist floated among the tops of the trees. Stumbling over the thick underbrush, the dead limbs, they pushed toilsomely on, through thickets, under dripping trees, into the boiling stream which was their guide. At first Alexandra remarked the cloudy cliffs, the grim trees, then slowly silence settled between them. She was there by his side, with a quick smile when he looked at her in concern, gallant and ready. They waded again into the mountain stream, now swollen, and he held her against the rushing water.

"The cañon is opening," he said, "not far now to the camp! We shall be out in a little while."

She looked up buoyantly. But her steps began to lag. "Could we wait a moment?" she begged.

"Not more than a moment," he replied anxiously. There was only an hour of daylight left, and then! "My watch has stopped," he muttered. "Come!"

"Taskmaster!" she murmured, still sitting. "And I am so hungry! Aren't there birds or things?" He held out a hand. "Let me sit here while you fetch something to eat from the camp—and dry clothes!" She showed a dripping sleeve.

He grasped her arm and forced her to rise. Obediently she dragged step after step, he supporting her, at first with his hand upon her arm, then with his arm about her, half dragging her along the rough way. Thus they made slowly in the waning light another stage of the long journey. At last, with a gentle smile upon her lips, she whispered, "I am so tired . . . please!" and sank unconscious into his arms.

He laid her upon the deep moss beneath a fir, and poured the last of his small store of brandy between her lips. The gray eyes opened; she tried to rise, then sank back upon the soft bed wearily. "It's too good — let's stay here — they'll find us somehow!"

He took her in his arms like an unresisting child, and raised her upon his shoulders. She clasped her arms about his neck. Then, staggering, he started once more downward in the desperate attempt to reach a place of safety with his burden before the night completely shut in. It seemed that for hours he staggered on thus, in a kind of dream, following the wandering course of the icy stream. The walls of the valley had broadened and were now hid in the mist and gloom of stormy twilight. He bore her steadily through the dark forest. She was lost in sleep, waking once to murmur, "Not there yet? Let us rest — stay here!" And he answered soothingly, "A little farther!"

A wonderful radiance of happiness had come over the man. He forgot hunger and fatigue. Except for the stout determination that urged him forward he would gladly have rested his burden there beneath some sheltering tree, have built her a hut of branches in the wilderness, and sat down to wait, content in this warm joy of loving. But he stumbled forward, hearing more distantly in his dream the rush of water over stones, the wind in the great trees. The warmth of her body penetrated him; her arm about his throat was like a band of fire. He dreamed they were of one flesh and spirit. His cloudy mind had returned to the visions of his boyhood: he was bearing at last the woman of his desire close within his arms, and there was nothing between them, evermore, no barrier of flesh nor of earth between them and their love — nothing, nothing! . . .

He stumbled upon a fallen tree, tried to recover, fell. When he awoke he saw the red glow of a fire, and squatted before it was the ridiculous figure of Nathaniel Butterfield in baggy Scotch knickerbockers and Tyrolean cap that sat jauntily upon his grizzled Olympian pate.

"My dear fellow," he drawled, "what on earth were you trying to do with Miss Arnold?"

"Reach the clouds," Hugh answered solemnly.

"But where have you been?"

"God knows!" he sighed. "All she needs is some food — and rest!" He relapsed into stupor.

The next day, enveloped in the cloudy folds of a lace gown, with a single band of gold about the throat, Alexandra lay in a long chair in the private car. Rosy, light-hearted, and gay, she amused herself with the young man, who sat dumbly before her, humble, and full of fear.

"Another time," she teased, "we might not come back from the snows — if I weighed more!"

"It was an awful chance," he murmured, looking at her

with eyes which said, "and if it were ten times the chance, I would give my life for it!"

"Our great adventure!"

"The rape of the princess," Conny Rickers giggled in her falsetto. "I thought you had skipped to the other coast — I urged the anxious father to telegraph."

"We might have — if we had only thought to take some food!" laughed the princess.

Grant rose stiffly to leave, the shriek of the eastern express just sounding. This foolish chatter dimmed the beauty of those hours.

"It is very dangerous," the university president pronounced, "to go into such hazardous ventures, unprepared."

"There are times when one is thrust into hazard," Grant began haughtily.

"And then if one is a man —" Alexandra completed. . . .

Thus he left her, enveloped in the quibble and chatter of her world, equipped in the clothes and the luxury of her sophisticated self. His woman of the snows had slept and awakened — thus!

"You know," she said, accompanying him to the door of the car, "I sail next month — the winter in Rome, I suppose. You will be busy here?"

Her eyes rose above him to the glittering snowtops, confused with cloud.

"Yes!" he replied, waiting. For one moment the gray eyes rested upon him gently, and he saw the woman he had borne through the storm. Then, as the train coupled the car with a jerk, — "Good-by! Go back to your clouds and snow!" She gave him a strange smile, in which there was mingled the two women he knew of her. . . .

With that same enigmatic smile, her arms about a cluster of yellow roses, — spirited hither into the wilds by the only magic that Michael Peter could command, — she stood in the door-

way of the car and waved him farewell. He could read upon the smiling lips, "Go back to your clouds! For I sail to other coasts—we may never meet again." . . . And the long train, gathering speed, bore her away across the arid plain until to his straining eyes she was but a stain of white and gold at the apex of the vanishing car.

A cloud of swirling dust hid even this. Alexandra had vanished, speeding away across the continent to the peopled cities, the joyous world of men and—roses. The woman of his vision, who for the moment had stepped from the clouds above Rainbow Falls, was left behind up there, where the earth met the sky in a shimmer of white and azure.

So he went back to his clouds to "harness the snows," in the mountain silence. And as he passed hither and thither on long journeys, about his man's work, there was a secret song in his heart. For the woman of his vision had come to him; he had borne her in his arms up there aloft. Let the gorgeous butterfly, this princess Alexandra, float whither she would, she had left within the inner chamber of his heart this other one that would journey with him always—to the end.

Thus came to him "that larger horizon," whereof Alexander Arnold in his wisdom had not known.

XVI

THE STEPS OF POWER

BACK to the great City of men! For the glistening wires lead thither, from Rainbow Falls, from every corner of the vast country, centring in the misty cañons of the lower city.

And now it is a towered city, indeed, to which the man returns. As a stranger he passes through its crowded streets and gazes upward to the mountainous heights of lofty buildings, topping one another in the mad will to touch the sky. He remembers the steel web on the corner of the avenue that the architect Ellgood and the bankrupt builder once bartered a piece of their souls to build. Already it has disappeared, giving way to a marble shaft, its golden pinnacle lost in the upper smoke. And the City Construction Company has been engulfed in the National Building Company, its name large on the hoarding. . . . Where the National Deposit had been there was a slit in the cañon wall, a deep pit in which men were digging amid hissing steam for new foundations. Failure was thus erased. . . .

For the black eddy of Panic has been forgotten, and the upward wave of prosperity is flooding to ever higher levels throughout the land. "These eighty millions!" so fondly invoked by Gossom in his weekly and monthly prayers. "The world has never beheld such a mighty people." From sea to sea the "wheels of industry are whirring." Colossal enterprises spring by night from the brains of the jugglers of finance. The broad land yields its silent increase, and from the fields and the mountains and the forests the golden stream

rolls downward to the great City, filling the vaults of its treasure houses. And in the pages of *Ambition* may be read weekly the stories of the heroes,—with the tables of their possessions. Hear President Butterfield, phrasing the thought of the contemplative observer, the guide of youth, “Young men should rejoice that it is their destiny to live in such an era of great deeds as the present!” The young men whoop at their games, as is the wont of young men, and rejoice to be alive in any era of history.

Those champing steeds with metal harness that fascinated the eyes of Hugh Grant when first as a youth he watched the pageant of the City street are now antique,—still used by the unconvertible aged, who invest their money in three-per-cents and keep the Sabbath. In their place the streets are filled with swift chariots and a bad smell, and men are talking of flying, to escape the crowded earth. An hour cut from an ocean voyage is heralded as human triumph. The biggest, the fastest, the richest yield to something yet bigger and faster and richer, which will hold the crown for the day. “Achievement!” cries Gossom, “is in the air. The powers of men multiply.”

And yet, in this “Splendid Renaissance” — a Butterfield phrase — life in its elements remains much as it has been always for you and me. The same black stream of toiling human atoms flows to and fro across the giant causeway. The same dingy rows of brick boxes house the millions who labor and long. The same hot struggle for the spoils seethes up and down the cañons of the City. And the golden flood, — transmuted into paper titles in bank vaults — becomes surely as always the weapon of the strong. For man is the same in spirit. . . .

Hugh entered the familiar banking-room where his youth had passed, and stood beside the assistant cashier’s desk.

"How are you, stranger?" Venable greeted him warmly. "Back in your old home!" He pointed to the moving file before the little windows of the wire screen. "And you have grown, man, grown!" No longer the slim stripling, with the clean white face, that had once stood there, but the solid man of firm flesh and bronzed, weathered skin. Venable looked his admiration for the man. And to Hugh the assistant cashier seemed shrunken, worn by the grinding years, also shabby and old. But the laughing gleam of blue eyes was still warm.

"You have made good, I hear!" Keen phrase of the street! It sounded hearty, but wistful, to the younger man. Why had the goddess brought the chance to the youth, and never to him? And Hugh thought, also, why never the chance to him, old Ven!

"Come home to cash in?" queried Venable. "This new company — the merger they are talking about?"

"Yes — for that and other reasons." So they talked business awhile, and then as Hugh left, the assistant cashier said, "Don't forget Columbia Heights."

The young man smiled and nodded, asking, "How are you all?"

"Just the same! Making the ends meet and trying to solve the problem of patient poverty." And he saw the drab suburb with its changeless days, — the wife older and ampler, the boys pushing upward, demanding their life, the suppressed ambitions for them, adjustment with circumstance. . . .

"And Madeleine?" he asked.

"The same," was the reply. "Only she must do it all now!"

They spoke of the Bank, and Venable said, "We are becoming a great power — national. . . . Oliver has begun to build his monument — over there where the National Deposit once was, you remember?"

"What?"

"A splendid home for us. Ellgood is doing it — in marble and bronze. You will see the plans in Oliver's office — he is proud of them. No big building, you understand, but a jewel-box, a marble temple, the snobbery of money. The site cost two millions, and we take it all — for Oliver's monument. The directors humor him in gratitude for our success. Another six months, and you will find us housed within the temple behind marble, with the bust of Oliver the First at the door, and the story of Oliver pictured around the walls — why not? Oliver learning the lessons of prudence at the knee of Benjamin Franklin; Oliver accepting the trust of the people's money; Oliver presiding at a directors' meeting of the Universal Power Company."

Hugh burst into a fit of laughter as Venable with twinkling eyes elaborated the theme in his accustomed manner.

"Oliver teaching youth the principles of finance — yes, why not? A splendid fresco! In ancient Egypt kings built their tombs in the flower of life and took thither their wives and concubines to dwell with them forever. Why shouldn't our banker kings build their monuments while they live? And if gossip is right, Oliver is about to make an almost royal alliance. . . . We'll have the stranger and the young coming to see us and to admire the bust of Oliver, — to see what Prudence and Thrift will do for a man."

He waved Hugh toward the private offices of the president, and as Hugh sought the banker he was still laughing at Venable's extravagant fancy, thinking, "And why never the chance for him, also, in all the chances of this prosperous time?" . . .

"Ah, Grant!" the banker exclaimed with cordial warmth. "I've been looking for you — telephoned about the hotels." He waved Hugh to a seat and waved the architect from his audience. Hugh, still smiling from Venable's quip, recalled the

day when Arnold had brought him hither, and he had sat forgotten beside the door, and also that other time when Oliver Whiting was trembling in fear. But the banker, stout and rosy, gave no sign of anxieties these days. His cheerful air of habitual success had something youthful in it. "See our plans," he said, unrolling the architect's sketches. "Our new building — very fine, eh? Ellgood's best work, I think, though some prefer the Museum he's doing for Arnold." He looked lovingly at the delicate lines of the Grecian temple with its heavy portico and rounded pillars. "And the interior, — oh, something very reserved, all marble!" Oliver, to the banker and the philanthropist and the horticulturist, had added a certain connoisseurship in the arts.

"Well," he broke off, buoyantly. "All goes well, eh? The new plant is ready."

"We can turn on the power," Hugh said, "whenever the decision is rendered."


"That suit — very annoying." He paused. "Talbot tells me he expects the hearing before the Supreme Court at Washington will be this coming month. It may delay us — a little," he resumed in his buoyant manner. "But Talbot tells me we are sure of getting a decree. Those fellows haven't a leg to stand on."

"That isn't the feeling out there."

"Mere clamor," the banker retorted pettishly. "All this socialistic talk — they'll frighten capital, and then where shall we be? Another panic!"

His cherubic face became suddenly grave, and Hugh, remembering that other panic and Oliver shaking at the telephone, smiled.

"It will be arranged," the banker said, looking for some papers, "if not in one way, then in another. And here," his stout fingers plunged into the mass of typewritten papers, "is the plan for the Universal Power Company — good name, don't you think?"



Oliver loved the poetry of company names. This one had been considered with fond care. Something large and vague, all-embracing like the charter, yet fascinating to the public eye and ear, he had sought and found.

"Capitalized for two hundred millions," he continued lightly, habituated in his career of financial juggler to huge sums.

"Two hundred millions!" Hugh exclaimed.

The banker looked up in surprise.

"The constituent companies have eighty millions of securities, and we must provide for the future, you know — the future!" he repeated softly with a glow on his handsome face.

"But we have already trebled our original capital," Hugh observed. "And that was one-third nerve and a third hope!" the younger man laughed. "Aren't you going rather strong?"

"When the Rainbow Lake auxiliary is turned on," suggested the banker, drawing a table of earnings toward him, "at so much per horse power, your company should make — " and he began to figure lightly with a pencil.

"Our rates are very high. They are asking for cheaper power. I have promised to reduce the rate when the new station is turned on."

"Why?" asked the banker, coldly. "Senator Dexter takes all the extra power for the Tomahawk mines, doesn't he? And Ravi has promised a contract for the railroad."

"At those figures he would be robbing his stockholders."

"They will take care of that, I've no doubt."

In the familiar phrase of the market they would find the way to "pass on" the charge to others; Hugh listened in silence, for in truth he was somewhat bewildered. The years he had spent in activity far from the atmosphere of finance, he had lost the City point of view. The banker, laying aside his pencil and paper, said briskly: —

"I assure you that all these details have been very carefully

worked out by the engineers, and the underwriters have agreed to the capitalization, and all else. Would you like to see the list of our underwriters?"

Hugh read the list, — all golden names of finance, strong "interests," bankers and capitalists. They had faith in that "future" so confidently mentioned by Whiting, and they would undertake to peddle out to the public the millions of paper shares of the new company. As he read he performed the simple sum that multiplied his own modest interest in the venture to terms of wealth.

The banker smiled benevolently on him with the air of saying, "We are all good fellows together, and this is a happy world of opportunity, for those who know how to take it!"

Alexander Arnold's name was not among the "underwriters," nor yet on the list of directors of the Universal Power which the banker next produced. In this affair his name nowhere appeared, and yet Hugh did not doubt that his was the guiding will, and Oliver and the others mere fingers of the master hand. But his thought went back to his own share in that round two hundred millions of paper certificates, and his cool head began to warm with the intoxication of the game. He read the names of the directors in the new company, all inconspicuous, mere minor officers of the army of finance. The great ones kept from sight in this censorious age, discreetly veiling their obnoxious personalities behind their lieutenants. The last name on the list was his own, and the young man looked up with a flush of surprise. The banker beamed benevolently upon him from twinkling eyes.

"You will go on as *our* representative," he explained. "We have been much pleased at the grasp you have shown out there, Grant. I may say that you have displayed a really remarkable power in the way you have made something out of the Rainbow Falls Company — shown foresight and power."

He continued in the complimentary vein for some moments, concluding: —

“What we men entrusted with large enterprises are always looking for are abilities like yours. And when we find them, we reward them.” He nodded his head significantly. And he hinted at further advancement, a vice-presidency, ultimately the presidency, in certain contingencies, of the great power company.

“We believe in you!” the banker pronounced emphatically. And Hugh Grant, listening to the honeyed words of commendation, heard as in a dream the bitter laugh of the bearded Anarch, “They have corrupted you! They are buying your little God-given talent, and they will make you work for them, to breed their gold! You will help them take toll of the future! Ay, with your hands the chains will be laid upon us all.” But the good Gossom, “Another example of the virtue of Success — I may say that I too have been a force in that young man’s career.” To which Nathaniel doubtless would subscribe, adding, “Knowledge is power; character is opportunity well grasped; an industrial organizer is a public benefactor.”

Behind all was the grim face of that old, white-haired man who said nothing — the law of life itself!

But the man, thinking swiftly of the meaning of it all, saw a woman with gold hair, and her arm was tight about his throat. He had sped to her as the winged arrow speeds upwards. Daughter of Power! He — the foundling — was drawing near her glittering realm! . . .

“This was why I sent for you,” the banker said, with a winning smile. “You need have no fears — the men who are behind this power company are the kind who put things through! There have been obstacles like this suit — there is always opposition — but in one way if not in another these men get their ends.”

The affable tone had dropped from the banker's rich voice, and the rosy smile from his face; the claw of the beast ready to strike could be seen.

"And now," he said, resuming his cordial amiability, "we'll go to the club for luncheon. I've asked some of those concerned to meet you — Talbot will be there."

Oliver Whiting touched the bell to summon his secretary, having disposed of this little matter in the morning's routine, and the clever juggler of values became the simple amiable host, benevolent and patronizing to the younger man, who had grown up, so to speak, in his own house. The two passed out of the busy bank and entered the bright rooms of the luncheon club, a twenty stories above the roaring city streets. It was a cheerful place, this club at the top of the cliff, where men came less for the good food skilfully served than to discuss their affairs in quiet and comparative seclusion. It was a famous hatchery of schemes and promotions, of speculation and all the bloodless skirmish in the warfare of dollars. Hither came the Predatory Males, ruddy-faced, powerful men, well-dressed, keen of mind and firm of hand. Hugh and the banker presently joined a group of these seated about a round table near the window. Through the steam wreaths outside the window could be seen, far, far down on the earth, that hole where the workers were building the foundations for Oliver's monument. And northward among the tumbled roofs might be seen the giant letters of the Symbol.

The keen-eyed men around the table ate their food and discussed their affair in short, sharp phrases. All the intricate labor of this modern creation had already been done in quiet conferences at clubs, in silent offices, and now the Event was waited, the fit moment for public announcement. But the state of the nation was disturbing. "The Madman at Washington — the Tariff — Unrest," — such were the topics in their mouths. For they feared, it was easy to be seen, —

feared a thousand things, and especially "the prejudice of the public — hostile legislation."

But that gray fox Thomas Talbot, plumper and grayer than ever, assured them all would be well.

"They will do nothing at Washington."

"Mere popular clamor," thought the banker, who had grown accustomed to the growl of the public.

So they fell to discussing again the terms of the juggle, — this company so much, that one so much — the game of cards. And Hugh Grant listening intently to these experienced players saw in complete outline the creation of the project. "The Ozark Heat and Light Company, Little Falls Power, Shenandoa Electric, Alabama Light and Power," etc., etc. What a fantastic conglomeration of innocent names! Yet all with a sinister meaning. In the busy years that had just passed, these Deeds had been done separately, here and there, apparently by chance in this state and that, wherever God made the opportunity, scattered at random throughout the great country. And now the hidden hand of control was gathering in the threads to weave the big cable. When it was done — when the Universal Power Company was a Deed — then it would be sold at a good price to the ignorant public, and the common man might have the privilege of owning a little piece of his own chains. The old, old game! But magnificently staged.

When Hugh Grant, realizing what the common citizen of Tomahawk thought of the manner in which God's gifts were being appropriated, ventured to express another doubt of earning powers, once more was heard the magic word: —

"The future!"

Ah, yes — the future. But *whose* future?

So these men, having moderately drunk and eaten, with a fervid belief in their country and the promise of its future, finally dispersed. Talbot lingered with the banker to discuss

a charity of which Oliver Whiting was the president, — the Home for the Crippled Blind. For Oliver was already famous in the city for his philanthropies. No important board of any organization to further Good Deeds was complete without his name, and half the endowments for charity were banked at the Republic. Oliver had the pride in this special form of fame that Alexander Arnold was reputed to take in his collection of coins and bronzes and ivories. Part of the harvest to be gathered out of that promising future would be given the Home for the Crippled Blind, and other Good Deeds — peace-offerings to the God of Chance. . . .

"Glad to see you, Hugh!" Percy Todd was shaking him enthusiastically by the hand. "Saw you over here — great things doing, I hear, eh? Power?" His smiling face had a sly look about his eyes, as if like a hungry robin he was waiting for a juicy hint. "The public is tremendously interested in all this. Couldn't you give us some articles for *Ambition?* Descriptive and all that — think it over!"

Hugh laughed, realizing the horror this proposal would arouse in the banker and the lawyer, now in close conference beside him.

"Power, now," persisted the editor, with his trained scent for material, "why, the title alone is good! . . . I'm going to Washington, — article on 'How the Tariff is Made,' you know. . . . Think of that power idea, will you?" And the editor of this young man's popular weekly, *Ambition*, bustled away, hurrying doubtless to some broker where he might place his order for so many shares of "Power, when and if issued!"

Hugh was thinking. The clouds had been harnessed, the golden flood was flowing, — his task performed, a man's task! If the Todds and Whitings and Arnolds must play their game, — gamble with the future, — why not in Power as well as in Wheat or Coal or Oil or Transportation?

He was roused from his meditation by the lawyer Talbot, who laid a fatherly hand upon Hugh's shoulder and murmured an invitation in his ear.

"We can discuss the Rainbow Falls matter," he said, alluding to the celebrated case. "I'd like to have you hear my argument before the Supreme Court, if you can arrange to be in Washington next month."

And the banker, after the lawyer had departed, broached another bright topic, as they wended their way back to the Bank :—

"This underwriting will be a good thing— what shall I put you down for?"

Surely when Oliver Whiting and his friends "believed in a man," his path was paved with golden opportunities!

At the close of the day Hugh Grant wended his way through the City streets, now teeming with the thousands pouring forth from the high buildings where they had labored. His brain was weary with the glitter of Opportunity, visions of Aladdin's lamp deftly rubbed under Oliver's skilled fingers; and yet beneath all in him — beneath triumph and stimulated egotism — lay an uneasy thought. Distaste of the City ways? He had lived good years in the wind-swept places beneath the mountains, where men were men, not jugglers of paper symbols. They built their lives out of the ground, not in dizzy Babel towers of cards. There came back to his crowded mind that common citizen of Tomahawk, — Tom O'Brien, forsooth, — in whose humble home he had eaten many a meal, and Tom said to him:—

"Where am I in that wonderful future you and your companions have been portioning among yourselves?"

Where, indeed!

Hugh entered the vast hotel, glittering with light, gold and bronze and marble, tapestried walls and velvet curtains,

where those who made money in the City lived and played. Excellent music floated in the air, and the gay laughter of men and women. . . . He was climbing the bright steps of power, and far off at the apex stood a smiling figure in white and gold — a woman who loved Power.

woman of his vision. He had seen her framed in the snows that lie about lofty mountain peaks; he had dreamed of her in Rome and Paris and London, in India and Japan — where not? Sipping the delights and the varieties of life wherever. He saw her standing before him against bright tapestry, tinkle of music and voices in his ears, and after the fashion of the hour she was dressed in snaky, sinuous folds, — a lily face at the tip of a long stalk.

So he was seated among them, near the Prophet, and the ripple of light talk moved on about him, — amusement and extravagance, the twitter of petty interests. Alexandra, pleased with the accidental, always expectant of the unexpected, savoring the double flavor of odd associations, glanced from the purple Prophet with the long beard to this hardy son of the times, — fresh from breaking earth at the frontier, and she said: —

“Have you harnessed the snows?”

“Yes,” he replied with a sombre gravity that went ill with the scene. “They are ready now to yield gold.”

The sparkling jewels on the breasts of the mountains after diverse transmutation would sparkle once again — and here, in this little corner of the rich garden of power. He read upon the woman’s lively face the thronged experience through which she had passed since they had stood alone upon the wind-swept scarp of the lofty mountains. And she seemed vastly separated from him — here.

In his fixed eyes she saw that which stirred and troubled her — power. The music played softly, covering the voices, provoking smiles and glances between men and women, the pleasant play of sex. These two looked. At last the little company moved on to other scenes. Alexandra said invitingly: —

“We have hills and snows at Paradise Valley. Come and see where brother Morris is to perch, — in a cave!”

who had become her career, whispered, "He must be an Indian prince! He's with Miss Arnold, — the blond one." . . .

The broker's wife pressed refreshment upon the Prophet, but he rejected it.

"He never eats but once a day," his sister explained, "and then only curds and whey."

"Mi-l-k," groaned the little lady from the Lyric. "And is that for inspiration? If one is a prophet, must one eat so? Ah, no!" She shook her head.

But Conny, who felt a coming access of devotion since the advent of Morris and his purple tunic, sighed, "It must give pure thoughts."

"And he is going to live in a cave!" Alexandra explained. "It's on the hill behind the house in Paradise Valley. He can't sleep under a roof."

"In a cave!" There was exclamation. "You will take us to see him there?" Morris moved restlessly at the prospect of the pilgrimage.

"Prophet," said the irrepressible Signora, "you will come to hear me, will you not? I will make you have inspiration, — dream the dream of your life."

"I never go to the theatre," the Prophet replied, winking uncomfortably behind his gold spectacles.

"Then I must go up to the cave and sing to you there!"

And just here came Hugh Grant, stalking blindly through the pretty pageant of the hotel room, — the music tinkling emptily in his ears, the laughter and the chatter unheeded, the women's faces and the attitudes of the Predatory Males unseen. For his eyes were — upon the mountains above Tomahawk!

"Still among the clouds?" The low, laughing voice crossed his dreams, and the tense eyes of the man rested upon the

idea — some woman might get hold of him — he can't get into trouble there!"

"Father," protested the daughter, "you don't understand Morris. He will have a wonderful life up there in his cave, undisturbed, thinking his thoughts."

"What thoughts?"

"At least he does what you do — he leads his own life!"

The hoary old individualist snorted:—

"Life! Do you call that life? . . . What's behind the beard? That's what I'd like to know!"

So for some weeks, the cave of the Prophet became the end of fashionable pilgrimage, and the Prophet with his beard had a celebrity that reached even to the dim cañons of the City, where Predatory Males told one another the tale of Arnold's son, and laughed at the trick of fate which had given such a father two such sons.

XVIII

IN THE STILL DECEMBER FOREST

HE came upon her at the turn of the road where the shadows of old oaks lay upon the white ground, and the brown leaves still fluttered aloft in the cold wind. This, at last, was the face he had lived with, this wave of golden hair, this curve of neck and lips, these gray eyes, — he had borne her in his arms! . . . She met him with radiant welcome, joyously, as though for him — here in the still December forest — she would slough those experiencing years that had intervened between them. Once again they were in the valley of the Seven Peaks. Yet as he had become man, so had she ripened to full woman, conscious of the coming crest of life, the lift of the wave beneath her feet. Therefore she was grave, yet smiling before his eager eyes, and whatever of reserve she had meditated melted in that transforming glow of worship and desire which he brought her. Already many times she had met ardent and expectant eyes of men desiring her, turned them lightly, poised in her own will; but this one loved sternly. . . . She dallied with those memories sweet to him,

Did he remember the chain of jewels, — onyx, amethyst, and turquoise, set against the mountain side? And had he with a vandal hand harnessed them, too — *her* lakes? "I've seen them so often — and that storm in the valley." — No, he said, they were untouched, still gleaming, circled by the Seven Peaks, and with quiet affirmation: —

"Some day we shall see them again!"

We! Her cheek flushed at the audacity of calm claim, and, peeping out of her gray eyes at this man who assumed mastery, she veered once more.

"For the present, having no precipices, no avalanches, no unexplored Valley of Seven Peaks, we shall have to content ourselves with this!"

The forest reached before them, all still and white between the straight trees, swelling gently upwards under its mantle of snow.

"And we'll climb to Morris's cave and have luncheon with him and the Signora Fontana. A surprise for our Prophet! You will see how comfortable I have made him."

She pointed out the spot on the distant hillside where in a cleft of the limestone rock, old playground of her childhood, the bearded Prophet was now installed with his foreign servant.

They sauntered leisurely by a devious route through the feathery snow, crossing open glades where the brook lay deceitfully hidden and the alders, tufted white, glittered in the sun, then striking again into the dark wood, where it was silent and the wind brushed the upper branches.

In the silence of the forest Alexandra, daughter of Alexander, returned to the woman primitive, as she had once before in the mountains, as this man seemed to compel her, being ignorant of all the rest within her. She drew from him the story of his deeds, even to the steps of power whereon he stood, and she smiled at the evidence of success, approvingly. Thus men did, in the world that she knew. He was young, with sinews, and her instinct for power told her that he would reach distant goals. . . .

They rested snugly under a fir, rimmed by drifted snow. To his desire to know of her various living, she answered vaguely, "Oh, places — people!" thus gently marking the line of their intimacy. The mountains and the still forest,

she would share with him; not the life that touched the world. On these terms she would bare herself to him as to no other, giving abundantly of what no other knew to be within her soul.

"Tell me rather," she resumed, "of that pretty girl — the one at the game long ago, you remember?"

"May?" he asked wonderingly.

"Yes, May — your cousin, was she not? Where is she?"

"In the City, I suppose — I have scarcely seen her since that day at the game."

"But there was something between you, then?"

"I had kissed her that morning."

"I knew it! . . . And you did not go to her when she wanted you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because it was not love."

The woman's face grew rose, and she smiled.

"You kissed her!"

"Yes — but that was not love."

The smile faded. She understood the unsaid: love lifted the woman loved beyond the creature of sex into a new realm of wonder and worship and joy. The girl kissed had remained woman, the creature of sex.

"But the girl loved you," she said softly. "*I* knew it then."

"I did not love *her*," he said.

The glance from his grave eyes met hers, and she read, "I have waited for you!" Wonder of life, — a predatory, gregarious male who waited for the one who should be more than woman! Her breath came unevenly, and she was giddy with the dangerous play.

"She loved you!" she insisted softly. "And you left her!"

"She is marrying, I hear. . . . I said she was a cousin. But only in name. For I have no relatives. I am a foundling."

"A foundling!" The note of wonder was also cold, as if this word had rudely torn the veil of illusion.

"An old man named Grant found me one morning in his barn and took me."

"And you have never known your own people?"

"Never."

She looked away beneath the dark branches to the distant hillside, her gray eyes swiftly speculating. Now she was once more the woman of that large world in which men and women were placed in set rank and did not stand alone, where pride is born of place, and the stranger must be doubly proved. Then slowly the gray eyes softened, and yielding once more to the mood of their intimacy, she turned a gentle glance to him, saying:—

"It must be strange, never to know whence one comes, — to be alone from the beginning."

"The old man was good and kind, and what he had was mine as if I had been his flesh. Nevertheless, it is strange and wrong, to be born without ties, — it is one of the things that can never be changed."

"Other ties come —"

They were silent. Then, as if a concealed door had been opened, Alexandra continued, in musing tones:—

"I hardly knew my mother. . . . She must have been a wonderful woman, all sweetness and love! . . . She is living — in confinement."

"Living —"

"But no one knows."

She spoke as to herself in the silence of the snowy forest. "I go to see her sometimes — in that South where she was born. It isn't sad. For she seems to have gone back behind this life, to live in some other world of her own, with strange thoughts and loves, — oh, a beautiful world! The sort of world there might once have been for her

here. . . . You see, they were not happy, my father and my mother. He was steel, and she was — like the scattered flowers upon the earth. One day she wandered away, and when she came back to us she had forgotten. That was the beginning. It was best so. Then I was miserable. But as I have become woman, I understand. My father's world was not hers. . . . And we three children have all something of her in us — I, least. My older brother was wild and wilful, but he was generous. Hate came between him and his father, and he went away — I do not know where. And Morris — our poor Prophet — my father cannot understand him in the least! He has wandered about in an aimless, foolish fashion, from place to place, as if he were hunting for something. Now he has come back, in this ridiculous manner. He is still hunting, in his queer way, for something — for peace, perhaps. And father cannot understand — thinks him weak-minded. But it is harmless to live in a cave on the hillside through the winter, eat curds and whey, and go bare-legged. If that brings peace!" she laughed.

"Now we must go find him — the Fontana will be there before us." Yet she lingered, saying moodily, "So I am the only one left my father — a woman to inherit a man's world!"

"You are also your mother's child," he said.

"No!" she protested. "I am more like *him* than his sons. I find this world as it is very good. I am my father's child; I too love life and power!"

She threw him a mutinous look, as if thus she told him she could escape from his spell at will, and rising she parted the snow-laden boughs of the fir-tree beneath which they had rested.

"It must be nearly noon — we should hurry!"

Across the warm mood of their intimacy there had come an impalpable coldness, marking as it were some unseen and profound rift between their natures, which she mutely chal-

lenged the man to surmount if he could. Alexandra led the way, now, threading the snow-covered thickets with tall grace, singing a light song to herself. Like the grudging December sunshine, she had warmed him only to withdraw. . . . The path now led by the shore of the fish-pond, whose edges were black where the snow touched the flowing water. At the weir Alexandra paused to look at the trout fry squirming in the clear cold water, and, plunging a hand into the icy stream, she plucked forth some of the tiny fish.

"Beauties, are they not?" She held them up to show their spotted sides. "They have to be careful to separate the small ones from the bigger fellows. Little cannibals! They eat one another."

She dropped the silvery mites into the weir, and together they watched the squirming trout beneath the clear water.

"They eat their own kind?"

"Yes—their brothers and sisters. The big eat the little."

"Like men," he said, thinking of the cañons of the City through which lay the steps of power.

"Like men!" she repeated, a little smile on her lips, her gray eyes contracting. "And why not?"

"The strong survive."

"The strong are beautiful and powerful—they are able to do deeds. . . . I am glad that the strong survive. 'Twould be a dreary world if the strong did not survive!"

Thus she challenged him,—daughter of the race of the strong! Who would seek her must follow fast and do the deeds of power that the strong admire. And he, with his larger knowledge of the world of men and their ways with one another, said:—

"The strong,—the brutal and the lustful!"

She dipped from the weir another handful of the fish.

"The beautiful! the fit!" she mocked. "See!" she held

forth a fish with gold marking. "He is worth a dozen of the common sort."

"Even when he eats his kind?"

"If need be!"

"A life for a life, then."

The words sounded fatefully between them, marking a division of spirit. The woman shivered and let the fish slip back into the water.

"A life for a life — if need be."

In the clear brilliance of her gray eyes, the upward thrust of her head and firm lips, he might see the woman image of old Alexander Arnold, — the one whose greedy fingers had grasped power all the days of his life; the one who had eaten his kind in the struggle, when they were weaker. This was the female from that male, — pagan, triumphing, possessing. And this was the woman he loved. . . . Between them lay a gulf, — deep, deep; deeper than wealth or tradition or convention. Blind to its depth, they looked into each other's eyes, no longer smiling, troubled by unseen thoughts within their words.

He pointed to the darting fish, and suddenly unexpected words came to him, from some unknown level of his being, "It is not so with men!" and as she waited, he explained, "The best may be eaten, and the worst be the eaters."

Her lips curved doubtfully: —

"Best and worst? All we know is that the strong survive." She dealt out with a superior and positive air the wisdom of Butterfield and Ravi. "'Tis a matter of law! All else is sentimental — the talk of the weak-kneed."

"The law of nature, the law of animals," he persisted. "But you and I are creatures of a more complex law."

"What?"

"In us rises something else —"

"Oh, civilization —"

"More than the thin rag of civilization!"

She challenged him with level eyes, and he answered with even voice: —

"Love — not the love of animals," and her eyes fell before the coming words. "Love like the love I have for you!"

It was said.

Slowly her eyes met his, still with challenge, as though to say, "Only the strong will I accept!" . . . She turned, and with swift steps climbed the snowy path. He kept pace beside her, and thus for a time breathing quickly they mounted the hill. Above their heads was the gray rock in which lay the Prophet's cave. At the last twist of the path she paused and faced him, with trembling lips: —

"Words are foolish," she said.

His grave eyes met her evasive glance.

"Why argue about things?" she plead softly.

A moment more, and she might have rested in his arms, yielding to the spirit she would deny. Thus the conquering male would have captured her. She waited for the words of love that were unspoken. She could read them in the grave, questioning eyes. . . .

Her glance wandered out to the level valley, all white and sparkling, on to the farther hills that bound her realm. With a quiver she sprang forward up the path to the cave, once more mistress of her fixed self, — mistress of the white valley and the great house lying in the sunlight on its hill. The spell that had been woven in the still December forest was broken, and when she spoke again the tone and the words came from afar — from that other life. The measureless space between them was once more fixed.

"I hope," she said, "that Morris and the Signora have not eaten all the luncheon."

XIX

AT THE CAVE OF THE PROPHET

THAT December morning the Prophet had sat upon a thick rug before the mouth of his cave, stroking his beard and trying to extract comfort from the thin rays of the rising sun. Winter was upon him. The hillside that had trickled with little streams when he had first taken his abode in the cave had since frozen into silence. Of the birds that had hopped inquiringly into his rocky chamber at dawn only a twittering sparrow was left, — a vulgar, drab-coated beggar looking for food.

So this morning the Prophet sat somewhat dolefully huddled upon his knees before the mouth of his cave. The path from the valley worn by the feet of the curious in pilgrimage after the new, had been neglected these ten days, and, what was more immediate, the Malay had disappeared. There had been signs of revolt in him since the first flakes of snow had fluttered over the rock and the shrewd northwest wind searched the corners of the cave. But this morning when the Prophet awoke and called to the Malay to prepare his bath, which he took every morning at sunrise before the cave, there had been no soft guttural response. When finally he had bestirred himself from the thick rugs, with which Alexandra had provided him, there was no soft-footed Sing to be found. A deadly quiet pervaded the place; it was apparent that Sing had departed with his master's purse, and that white robe embroidered in gold by the hand of the broker's wife. The

Prophet cared little for either robe or purse, but he wanted his bath and his cup of goat's milk and basin of rice.

After a period of sulky contemplation in the wan December sunshine, he had been agreeably disturbed by the tinkle of the telephone, which Alexandra had thoughtfully provided for an emergency like this. At the summons from civilization the Prophet arose with alacrity. It was his sister's voice. Would the Prophet receive guests? — the Fontana had come from the City, specially. With surprising graciousness the Prophet bade them welcome. "I say, Alexandra," he piped, "you will have to send up some food — Sing has gone!" And then he returned to his position on the rug, and plucked his beard with a pleasant sense of anticipation.

Soon his sharp ears caught the sound of a voice below, and presently he saw the slight graceful figure of the little Signora Fontana, toiling up the snowy path, followed by a servant with a hamper. At the turn below the little woman paused, exhausted: —

"Is it yet far?" she demanded of the servant, pantingly. "I cannot go another step — the Prophet must fetch me up the rest. Ho, Signor Pro-phet!" she cried, and as Morris peered from above she waved a white hand. "See what we bring you! A feast!" She pointed to the hamper. The Prophet scrambled to her aid, and extended a long arm, with which she gained the level spot before the cave.

"*Ci-el!* but it's love-ly," she panted, in her soft voice that struck pleasantly on the hermit's ears. "You call it *Para-diso*, eh? Surely it is paradise after that infernal City. And the Prophet lives here always. I think he be lonely sometimes, no?"

Morris hurriedly brought from the cave another thick rug, which he spread in the sunlight, and also a camp chair for the Signora. But the little lady, waving the seat aside, plumped herself upon the rug.

"*Madonna mia!* To sit when a holy man of God squats on his knees!" She touched the hem of the Prophet's tunic with her fingers. "Is there haircloth underneath it?"

"No!" the Prophet replied, twitching the garment from her curious fingers. The discreet servant, busy in spreading forth the contents of the hamper, coughed. The Prophet said wistfully, — "I have eaten nothing since yesterday noon."

"Starving? Quick! She took the neat bundles from the servant. "Pâté de fois gras — sandwich! Your sister would bring mi-lk and rice!" The Signora made a wry face. "But I said if the Prophet is to give me breakfast in his cave on the mountain, I must have something to eat. No?"


She deftly unwrapped a pheasant and salad, then a bunch of purple grapes, and laid them on the napkin. Lastly she drew forth a thin-necked bottle of wine, holding it aloft for the Prophet's admiration.

"Let us eat," she said. "You are starving, and I am too. Your sister said she would be here with a young man — likely she has found *her* prophet and taken him to another cave, eh?"

She smiled sympathetically on Morris, who watched her jewelled fingers arrange the food.

Thus they made a merry feast together, before the mouth of the cave, the Fontana insisting that the Prophet taste every dainty, feeding him with her little fingers. With faint protest the hungry Morris ate pâté de fois gras and pheasant, even clinked glasses with the actress, and drank a long draught of cool Chablis!

"Good, no? you feel better already for food and some company? You can pray better for it afterwards. . . . What you do all day? Sit like that, on your knees?" She humped herself like a meditative monkey. "And think, think — what you think about? How good you are, eh?" She refilled the Prophet's empty glass. "You think of us in the great City — us poor, bad people who don't sit on our knees and live in



caves? Drink the wine! It make you feel more like us — jolly!"

She held the glass to the Prophet's bearded lips and forced him to quaff it. Some drops spilled over and ran down upon the silky beard. "Oh," she cried, and with a napkin carefully wiped the wine away from the beard. "Is it real, Prophet?" She gave it a little tweak as a child might test the reality of her doll's chignon. Grasping it more firmly, she gave another twitch, and as the Prophet exclaimed, "Ouch! Don't do that!" she nodded her head gravely. "It is real!"

The Prophet took refuge within the cave, but the Signora followed him, exclaiming at the purple rug on which he slept, the silver basin and ewer, the teakwood stand with its Indian lamp, shaded to protect the Prophet's eyes. She clapped her hands.

"It's like the theatre! Come — we must act, — Arsino and Bellarmine. You are Arsino, and I am your Bellarmine. Sit there!"

She took the tall Morris by his shoulders and forced him to his knees. "Now, Prophet, make love to me! Come — I show you how to make love to a woman!" She sat him on the boulder, and took his place upon the rug. "I kneel at your feet — so, and I look up into your eyes — so!" The Prophet blushed beneath his beard. "Now take my hand and bend over me — no, it is a wo-man's hand!" she cried indignantly, baring her pretty arm, and holding it forth to the Prophet, who took it awkwardly and held it away from him. "Kiss it, Prophet! It is good to kiss!"

As the Prophet's lips closed upon the little hand, laughter came from the mouth of the cave, and Alexandra appeared with Hugh. Morris, wrapping his tunic about him in embarrassed silence, plucked at his beard. But the Signora Fontana announced unabashed: —

"I was giving the Prophet a little lesson in love. You never made love to a woman, no?" she said reproachfully to the blushing Prophet. "But what good to be a Prophet if you have never made love? If you haven't had the experience of woman? . . . Now I will teach you! Put your hand in mine again — come!"

The sulky Prophet refused the lady's advances, serving thus to rouse further merriment from his sister.

"He is vera obstinate," complained the Signora. "*Your* prophet, now," — she looked approvingly at Hugh, — "he can make love, no?"

"I hope you have left us some luncheon," Alexandra remarked, coldly. "While you rehearse Morris in the gentle art of love we will see what there is to eat. I am famished!" . . .

Thus with jest and light laughter the time sped at the cave of the Prophet until the falling sun sank behind the cliff.

"Come, Prophet!" said the Signora. "It is time to go back."

"Morris never comes to the Hall," said Alexandra. "I'll send Mason up with some more provisions for him."

The Signora cried in protest: —

"Of course he comes back with me! I want him to play with. I can't stay in that great house all alone without my Prophet. He was a man — sometime." And then to the hesitating Morris, "Mr. Prophet, you come along with me like a nice man."

And Morris, still pulling at his beard, obeyed, to his sister's astonishment, meekly following the little Signora over the snowy path.

"He is a good little Prophet," purred the Signora. "I'll teach him to make love — then he will be perfect!"

The great house was warmly lighted, and its master was seated alone in its lofty hall before his famous picture, his eyes resting in loving contemplation upon the forms of the Holy Family. Observing his bearded son, he growled: —

“Frozen out?”

The Prophet slunk away to his bath, and the little Signora chirped, “We are going to take him back to the City — to see life.”

The old man said to his daughter: —

“She’ll put him into pants!”

Alexandra laughed.

XX

THE WILL BEHIND

THE years seemed to have left no mark upon Alexander Arnold. To Hugh Grant the white-haired man seated before his rare picture in silent contemplation was precisely that one whom he had confronted years before upon the steps of the City house. It was as if life had worn him to the essential metal, and nothing — no shock public or private — could make further impression. Even a son like the Prophet evoked merely a few grim words.

"It's a fine picture!" he observed at last, motioning to the Madonna, upon whom shone a mellow light.

"Beautiful — but I don't know pictures."

"They are among the few things worth knowing well."

He looked at the young man steadily, with impassive scrutiny, and Hugh wondered whether he was even remembered.

"So you are back again?" Arnold said at last, when the silence was becoming unbearable.

"Yes, sir."

The old man refrained from question or remark that had to do with business. The younger man, impatient in presence of him whose will was behind all, mentioned brusquely: —

"This power company —"

"What company?" Arnold demanded shortly.

"The Universal Power."

"Oh, you mean Whiting's affair!"

"Whoever may be interested in it, they are making a mistake in capitalizing it for five times what the properties are worth!" he said boldly.

"How do you know that?"

"Because I know what they are earning."

Arnold smiled, as if the objection were childish. What had earning power to do with capitalization of enterprise? This able young man had not yet learned to distinguish between finance and industry. The old man observed dryly:

"I believe it was you yourself who once pointed out to me the great possibilities of that mountain region."

"And what I said has been justified — but —"

"The only practicable source of power in that section is water power?"

"True."

"Then I do not see how we can predict what the earning capacity of these properties will be."

This was what Gossom called "the impervious optimism" of our great leaders. But from the remark Hugh inferred that the Universal Power Company was to be sold to the public — after it had been boomed to a price in the market!


"It will be your business," the old man said judiciously, "to make the business earn all that it can. Do not worry over the future."

Kindly advice to the young man! His position was that of the good servant whom his master was ready to promote in this world. Be content, Arnold was saying, to be the important and serviceable spoke in this great wheel that abler and stronger men will put in motion. Nevertheless, blinded as the younger man was by love, caught in the meshes of the net, something within him demanded its right.

"The time is past, sir, when that sort of thing can be done safely!"

"What do you mean?" the old man asked sharply.

"For three years I have been living out there, away from cities and banks and finance. I have been living in a new world — among the people."



Arnold snapped: —

"The people are the same all over."

"There is a spirit abroad that Mr. Whiting and his associates have not sufficiently reckoned with — among the people," Hugh persisted quietly.

"The people!" The old man turned out the light that had shone upon the fair, painted face. Evidently this servant was not what he and Whiting had thought him to be. He needed some of those elementary lessons in economic law that President Nathaniel Butterfield might have given him.

"Mr. Grant, I have known 'the people' a good many years. In our country with our institutions they make a noise; but they do not count. This present clamor is newspaper talk. Business goes on."

"The people are learning all the time."

"Learning what?" the old man snapped.

"Learning that corporations like the Universal Power Company are robbing them —"


"Robbing them?"

"Of life — their chance to live."

Arnold shrugged his shoulders, and remarked with a scarcely perceptible sneer, "What chance to live will they have if they ruin business? . . . The country is all right, ready for a great leap forward, if we are let alone! And I think that we shall be let alone for the next few years. That's all we want — to be let alone."

Let us alone! The growl of the individualistic spirit that the old man voiced was the common cry of his kind from sea to sea. Let us alone! And the younger man was silent, at last aware of the futility of protest, of modification of this spirit. He had gone farther than he knew, farther than he himself had thought, along the steps of Power.

As he sat there in silence opposite Alexander Arnold, a curious wonder came into his mind, — what can this old man with




that feeble son, sitting here before his picture, warming his old blood at the fire, want? Why add this new company to his others? these few millions to the many already in his hoard? . . . He glanced with a feeling almost of contempt at the little, old, white-haired man, with his long, curving fingers.

Of him Percy Todd had written in *Ambition*, "Alexander Arnold is one of the most effective forces of modern civilization,—a supreme example of the application of imagination to the economic world." Hugh knew how false this was. Alexander Arnold had never created or imagined anything. He had bought what was cheap and had sold it dear to the public. Others conceived, others dared, others dreamed; Arnold bought and sold, like the huckster in the market, only on an enormous scale. The charitably-minded Butterfield had said, thinking of Arnold, "The really great are commonly misunderstood by their own generation." Ay, but not as the genial Nathaniel thought. The people feared Arnold; his name was always on their lips—because they did not understand him! . . .

Hugh Grant rose and crossed the room to the embrasure of the stately window and looked forth upon the peaceful snowy meadows of Paradise Valley through which wound the sinuous black thread of the rippling river. At the other end of the room Arnold was examining a fine print with a magnifying glass, ignoring the presence of the younger man. . . .

In that noble room, equipped with the precious spoil of many ages, significant events had occurred, such as that Sunday gathering of bankers and capitalists who had decreed the fate of the National Deposit and let loose panic. In that reposeful room alliances had been consummated, which had reached in influence to the humblest laborer of the black-coated stream. Schemes of conquest had been conceived, to be executed by lieutenants. In that stately



room there had been scenes of a lighter character, domestic and passionate, and much discussion of art and letters. Indeed, here had been planned not long before the magnificent gift to the nation of the Arnold collections, over which Gossom and Todd and Butterfield had waxed duly eloquent.

So this meeting at the December nightfall of old Alexander Arnold with Hugh Grant, — a stripling yet in the field, — was of small moment. Nevertheless, in the involution of intricate fate, it might in the end be found significant, also. He had lived and thought slowly all these years, but latterly, since his feet had touched the steps of power, life had suddenly quickened. Standing there beside the window in the gloom, the young man began to see where the steps of power led. He strode back into the room, about to speak, when Alexandra appeared. She went slowly toward her father, and, laying a caressing hand upon his shoulder, bent over him, her golden hair touching his white hair.

"So solemn in the dusk!" she said, and looked across to Hugh, with a movement of the head that seemed to say again, "I am my father's daughter!" And caught by love, the young man let the words die. Arnold remarked in a casual tone, as though he had forgotten what had been said:—

"You will be going back to the mountains soon, I suppose?"

The stripling had been answered; the underling to his post! In that subtle language of silence where human beings face to face exchange the deeper thought within, he and Arnold conversed. Then he said:—

"Not yet! I shall go to Washington first."

"To Washington?" Arnold queried. That seat of government was the province of another set of agents.

"Yes, to Washington! The Rainbow Falls case is to be heard."

The old man made a little gesture with his hands.

"We shall be there this winter," Alexandra remarked.

"Washington is such an interesting sort of place — something important seems always about to happen."


"Perhaps this time it will happen," Hugh replied vaguely. "And now I must go."

"We will take you to the City to-morrow, with the Signora and the Prophet."

But he would go, impelled to escape into the night, to flee for the time from the woman he loved, from the place where love was a jest, and life was art and selfish will.

Alexandra went with him to the edge of the broad terrace, loath to have him part, seeking a word that would not come to summon back the mood of the morning. But neither spoke. The mood of the morning had gone like the sunlight in the still December forest.

"Washington, then!"



XXI

OUR CANTERBURY PILGRIMS

IN the long, swift-moving train, speeding southwards to the capital of the Nation that brilliant winter afternoon, there was assembled as large and varied a throng of pilgrims as ever set forth from Tabard Inn for the cathedral spires. Not clad in motley garb marking their degree, to be sure; but all clothed soberly in warm furs and neat business clothes as became a practical people. But in mind and heart it was a various gathering of patriots, all hopefully centred upon the great dome of the Capitol, cherishing secret desires to be there fulfilled.

It was the close of the holidays; grave judges, fussy legislators, anxious business men, comfortable dilettantes, important scientists, jubilant journalists — above all gracious Woman! — were comfortably journeying to the navel of worldly affairs upon the Continent. For the people of this great country, by their representatives in Congress assembled, were engaged in the annual effort to make laws for themselves. At the moment, they were laboring over that marvellous structure of privilege known as the Tariff. In the vernacular, the great "Trough" had been set beneath the Dome, and the hogs were fighting for the fodder. Or to use the more decorous Butterfield phrase, "The Nation is now struggling with the intricate problem of its economic development, so adjusting the burdens of taxation that its eighty millions of citizens may continue to enjoy the constitutional guarantee of 'Life, liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness'!"

So this bright winter day, a gleaming mantle of snow softly spread over the hard earth outside and genial black servants ministering to physical comfort within, the Congressional Limited is a cheery scene. In one of the forward compartments a small group of those representatives of the people, entrusted by the nation with the care of its "Life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness," is playing poker and discussing politics in a desultory fashion. The youngish man, smooth-shaven, who grasps his cards with the nervous tremor of a novice, has come from a far northern town near the national boundary. He represents "Pulp." Opposite him is seated an old gray-haired dog, knowing in the game; he is "Boots and Shoes." In the party are also "Hats" and "Gloves" and "Socks" and "Phosphates." The latter is a leader, and as he deals the cards he delivers himself:—

"The East must give way to the West, this time. The people out there will be heard."

But the knowing one — "Boots and Shoes" — shakes his head.

"It's fixed already — the schedules will go through pretty much as they are."

Percy Todd, who is seated at his elbow, handsome and debonair, also bound for the capital, where among other errands he will gather those tidbits of personal anecdote for *Ambition* so much relished by the public, — "Gossip about the Great," — pricks up his ears.

"Dexter's made a trade with those kickers from the mountain states — you'll see," and so it goes. . . .

In a neighboring compartment some men of business — serious souls these — discuss pet schedules of that mighty Tariff, and smoke many cigars, speaking in grave tones of the "state of industry," "unsettlement of business," "unrest," and other earthquaking themes. They will appear before committees and plead for their interests in the coming cutting of the national Pie.

In the smoking-room of the common car, lounging on the leather cushion in Olympian ease, sits Nathaniel Butterfield, exchanging gossip with the man from the Good Deeds Office, who has been made a secretary of a commission for investigating this or that. President Butterfield, who is to preside at the meetings of a scientific body in the capital, is forced for the nonce to travel without state, and genially improves the opportunity to exchange political gossip with the alert agent of the Good Deeds Office.

We must pass hastily over the ranks of the commoner kind, contenting themselves with magazines in the velvet plush chairs of the public coach,—country members, lawyers, brokers, and the lesser sort of man. Among these in an obscure corner is seated an old man, grizzled, and humped with rheumatism, a coat of faded blue pilot cloth hanging beside him. He gazes steadily out of the window upon the snowy landscape, absorbed in the flying scene of field and village,—and in his memories. Years ago, as a youth of seventeen, he had made this journey, — less swiftly, less comfortably. Crowded into dirty coaches with his boyish comrades he was journeying southwards then to fight for his country. . . . Ah, long years ago! and most of these Canterbury pilgrims have forgotten the fact. Now he hopes to get something out of the domed Capitol, like all the rest—a little increase in that monthly pension, which a generous government has been paying him for thirty years and more. Others have dipped their hands deep into the nation's purse—why not he? That other time he was not thinking of pay. The youth went to fight the battle of the Nation. . . . By his side squirms restlessly a little boy, his grandson, full of question:—

"And is Washington the place where they make the laws for all the people?" he demands in his piercing treble.

"Yes," the old man murmurs.

"I want to see that," the boy says.



Is it possible that the only patriot among all these eager pilgrims is this same small boy?

But too long we have tarried among these lesser folk in the long train. At the rear is a private car. In the station it was austere guarded from the common crowd, — dim and empty; but just as the train was about to move off three gentlemen arrived in a swift motor and unobtrusively entered the car, making themselves comfortable for the journey as they would in office or club. They are Alexander Arnold, whose private coach it is, Oliver Whiting of the Republic, and a tall lean gentleman, gray-bearded, with fine, aristocratic face and bearing, — the well-known Senator Dexter. The Senator is on his way to resume those labors of government for the people that the small boy hopes to witness. But the boy dwells in the land of illusion, like most of us. Senator Dexter, able and powerful, learned and rich, does not represent the people yonder beneath the Dome. He is Senator from the great state of —, in which "Boots and Shoes" and "Socks" are humble yeomen. But Senator Dexter does not represent the great state of —. He represents "Pulp," "Boots and Shoes," "Socks," "Phosphates," and many, many more odd things — for his reach is long. But above all he represents HIMSELF and Alexander Arnold, the quiet, old, white-haired man, — and his class, including Oliver Whiting, who is scurrying to Washington for a day out of his busy life to see the President and tell him what the country needs to have done — or principally not done — "if business confidence is to be maintained." The conversation of these three in the luxurious calm of the car "Alexandria" would be of exceeding interest to all the other pilgrims on the train, if they had been permitted to hear it. But, alas! we not more than they can penetrate that exclusive vehicle of power. Only in the events to come may we be permitted to infer the tenor of that conference, and know that it was entirely harmonious and inspired by the purest sort of

practical patriotism, — "What is good for me is good for thee, and for our country!"

Leave these three gentlemen of power at their abstemious luncheon in the private car "Alexandria," and return to a little compartment, midway on the train, where a short, plump, large-headed man, with a broad forehead, is seated beside the window, an open book upon his lap, a number of legal-looking papers scattered on the seat beside him, and on the window ledge a bottle of sparkling mineral water. It is the legal fox, Thomas Talbot, — leader in that band of skilful lawyers who have made this age famous less for forensic triumphs than for acrobatic feats of casuistry in defending the rights of property against the wayward greed of the lawless. Opposite him is Hugh Grant. The lawyer caught sight of the younger man, as the latter strode down the platform with knitted brows, and being something of a student of men, tapped upon the window and beckoned him within, — to see whether the banker's protégé was altogether a "safe man." These two have had a pleasant journey, thus far, for the gray fox is an amiable as well as a learned man of the large world.

Upon his fat knees is Augustine's "City of God." In that riverside "Farm," where the great lawyer relaxes, is a rare library of philosophical works and mediæval divinity, and between these and his tulip-beds he spends such time as he can spare from his labors in the City. In some other day, with another set of impulses abroad in the world, Thomas Talbot would have been a bishop of the Church, possibly a Pope, learned in patristic lore, great in council. With his glasses balanced in one hand, a fine smile illuminating his intellectual countenance, he has just completed an ingenious metaphysical defence of Infallibility, touching deftly upon idealistic philosophy, — the Neo-Platonists, the Hegelians, and the English tract-movement, — indicating to any one versed in the language that the lawyer inclined to metaphysical idealism as the

best possible interpretation of the illusory earthly phenomena, which for lack of a better term we commonly call life. His learned argument has not evoked much intelligent comment from his companion. Indeed, Hugh Grant, doing his best to follow the weaving hypotheses, arrives merely at the crude conclusion that it makes very little difference what a man believes with his head. The lawyer, mentally deploring the lack of philosophical training among able men of affairs, now contemplates the snowy landscape, gaining therefrom a subtle suggestion that curves the muscles of his clean-shaven mouth.

"Not far from here is the spot where Washington crossed the Delaware," he observed, pointing to the bleak field. "Some improvements in transportation since then! We have agreeably traversed in a couple of hours what it took the father of our country two years to subdue."

The swift train was rushing past a shabby farmhouse, consisting of two rooms and an exterior brick chimney. A gaunt woman with some children about her knees stood at the door of the house.

"You saw that hovel?" the lawyer said. "It was a home in this part of the country not unlike that from which Mr. Arnold came. Think of the ability a man must have — the sheer will and mental power — to lift himself out of that hole! It is such power which foolish agitators are trying to cripple by law. They might as well attempt to stem the eternal tides with brooms."

He oscillated his glasses between thumb and forefinger disdainfully, and sipped his mineral water.

"I, too, came from a home like that!" Hugh exclaimed abruptly.

"Indeed!" The lawyer examined the well-clothed person before him with fresh interest. "In our country," he said sympathetically, "it happens so again and again. Individuality triumphs!"

"What is more, I was a foundling."

"A foundling!"

"I was taken into the home of a kind old man, — David Grant, — who was poor."

"The best training for success!" the lawyer beamed.

"David Grant gave me his name," Hugh continued, less to the lawyer than to himself. "He was an honest man. I am beginning to understand what that means."

Talbot looked at his companion with puzzled interest.

"He died poor. He gave me what he had. Indeed, he was the source of all that I have to-day, indirectly. Years ago he had some business with Mr. Arnold, who was not a rich man then."

"I seem to remember," the lawyer said, with a dry smile.

"It was through Mr. Arnold that my first chance in the world came."

"I am sure that Arnold discovered the right material in you," observed the lawyer, suavely. "He is not one to help the incompetent out of sentimentality!"

"It remains to be seen," said Grant, with a little smile, "whether it was the right material, as you call it."

"You have made extraordinarily good, as the saying is — for a man of your years!" Talbot took another sip of the mineral water and smiled amiably upon the younger man.

"Out there in the mountains, you mean? Oh, I have merely done as any other might, given the opportunity. I have done the thing that came to hand — then the next, and the next —"

"That is the way of all great achievement!"

"But now it is not clear to me — the next."

"You mean?"

"Thus far I have been a servant, — one who accepted his job for the sake of his bread, and did the job in order to earn more bread —"



"We are all more or less servants in that sense," said the lawyer, mildly.

"Some more rather than less! . . . It might have gone on always like that. But suddenly matters have shaped themselves so that the next step is not clear. I am not sure — I am trying to see!"

He looked gravely out upon the snowy landscape, pondering.

"You must consider what?"

"The meaning of things —"

"The meaning of things?" repeated the lawyer, puzzled.

The younger man suddenly turned upon him with a swift demand: —

"Is this Universal Power Company merely legal robbery?"

"Legal robbery!" the lawyer exclaimed, shocked by the raw phrase.

"That's what they think of it out there!"

"Out where?"

"In the mountains — at Tomahawk — out there!" he repeated with a motion of his head toward the boundless West.

The lawyer laughed a mellow note, as if the opinion of the city of Tomahawk upon any subject was an idea of delicious absurdity.

"I do not know what the people of Tomahawk base their opinion upon. Toma-hawk, — isn't that the place where Senator Dexter's great mine is located?"

"Yes — and a branch of Ravi's railroad, and a number of other interests — but there are men out there also!"

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose you refer to this Rainbow Falls case?" The lawyer tapped the package of typed documents on the seat beside him. "It is my present mission to prove to the satisfaction of the Supreme Court of the United States that the law on which the conviction against the power company was

obtained is unconstitutional. I should like you to hear my argument if you have the time."

"I don't know about such things," the younger man mused. "And that's what I am here for — I want to know!"

The lawyer gave a clear synopsis of the celebrated Rainbow Falls case. At the conclusion the younger man remarked:—

"Isn't it said that law was passed for the precise purpose of being found unconstitutional —"


"I don't know about that."

"A thing may be legal and still — robbery?" Beneath the tan of Tomahawk which still endured on his clear skin there was a faint red.

"My dear fellow," the gray-haired lawyer remarked, laying a hand paternally upon Grant's knee, "don't bother yourself with such rot. Leave it to me. . . . I am afraid you have been taking newspaper talk too seriously."

"I do not make up my mind on talk — I mean to get the facts. That's why I am going to Washington."

Of all the human chatter on the long train this was perhaps the most unaccountable. The lawyer thought so at least. It had been his duty again and again in his long years of practice to restrain ardent clients from doing things which were patently criminal, and still oftener to find legal ways of obtaining illegal desires. But it had never been his fortune to persuade men that they could take what there was a clear legal opportunity for them to grasp! And this was the man whom it had been seriously proposed to advance to a position of high authority in the great power company, already popularly known as the Power Trust! What was he? Mere crank? Notoriety-hunter? Reformer? Sentimentalist? Weak-kneed academic idealist? They were the most opprobrious names to be found in the human index expurgatorius of the great lawyer, and none of them seemed to fit exactly the



clean-limbed, energetic, grave-eyed young man opposite him. . . .

"Even if the Supreme Court reverses the decision, as you expect it will, and dissolves the injunction, that does not settle the whole question. It may be robbery, just the same. And out there" — he motioned again with his head to the declining sun — "they won't stand for it! I know, because I have lived away from the City long enough to see things as *they* see them. The grab game, Mr. Talbot, has been pretty nearly finished."

"Think so?" The lawyer laughed dryly, and rang for whiskey. "What are you, anyway, Grant? You talk like a damned reformer." . . .

So the swift train sped on its perfect road-bed through village and town and over frozen winter fields while the lawyer argued genially with the younger man. He gave an illuminating picture of American life, a little résumé of history, incidentally a few philosophical remarks upon the nature of man. Civilization, he held, was based upon law. The uncivilized animal man was held in some sort of order by law, and the chief concern of law was Property. Property was sacred, and the right to create it, to hold it, to use it as its possessor would, to pass it on after his death as he desired, — that was the sacred barrier which stood between animal-natured man and social chaos. Talbot became warm with his own eloquence, quoted from many languages, grew emphatic, upset the mineral water and rang for more.

"Confiscation of property — that's what all this social unrest means, just that and nothing else. And every man who is a patriot must fight on the side of law to keep society from lapsing into barbarism."

There was a touch of moisture in his eyes, a note of religious enthusiasm in his voice. But at the end Hugh asked calmly:—

"Whose property, sir?"

"Whose!" Talbot rang for another glass of whiskey. "My God, I believe you are a socialist!"

"I don't know what that is — I merely wish to understand things."

"If you don't understand what life means at your age, you never will!"

"Oh, I think I shall."

"Don't you know history? Don't you know that the property classes always govern, always must govern? That under any condition of society the strong men will get to the top, as Arnold rose out of that muck-heap back there? It is the reason for our tremendous advance as a people that we make it easy for such men to rise! . . . The strong individualism of the American people will never permit the confiscation of property, nor the trammelling of those capable of leadership. . . . Constitutional guarantees must be maintained. . . . 'Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'!"

In the far distance rose dimly a great dome, swimming in the misty light of the late afternoon.

"That's Washington!" the lawyer exclaimed, gathering up his papers.

"Washington?" the younger man murmured, looking fixedly out of the car window at the swimming dome. The name conjured a thousand thoughts, and sent an inexplicable thrill through his nerves.

"We'll be in the station in a minute. . . . Well, we've had a lot of talk — now to business! Where do you stop?"

A preparatory bustle filled the train from end to end. The pilgrims were coming to their bright destination, and the thrill of hopes to be fulfilled fluttered each in his way. . . .

"Are we going now to see the men make the laws for all the people?" the little boy demanded of the old soldier.

"Not to-day."

"The tariff business will block all legislation this session," a man was saying to a companion on the platform.

The old lawyer, with his little black bag in his hand, was slowly passing, and seeing Arnold and Senator Dexter about to enter the Senator's motor, indicated the pair with a wave of his bag.

"I fancy," he said to Grant with a twinkle, "that the Tariff won't be in the way long."

"It is still in conference, is it not?"

The lawyer smiled.

"It has been in conference — all this afternoon. It must be nearly ready for the President's signature!"

For the plump little lawyer loved his jest.

XXII

"LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS"

WASHINGTON! . . . It was a lovely winter morning when for the first time in his life Hugh Grant mounted those long flights of granite steps leading to the Capitol. His heart was filled with an inexplicable emotion. Here, in this broad-winged granite building, beneath the swelling dome, the spirit of his great country found itself at last in government. Here the multitudinous, the warring wills of the nation became fused in Law. And in that Law, each living member of the whole, from the lowliest to the highest, had his share. "My country!" the ingenuous one murmured to himself. "Here in this great temple of the people shall I behold its spirit!" . . .

So on the broad terrace before the Capitol, he lingered, watching the throng of clerks and visitors as they came up the steps. A clear, soft, azure sky in which floated a few tiny clouds covered the city, and southwards across the winding river blue hills undulated to the horizon. Along the broad, radiating avenues beneath him the trees were white with a light fall of snow. In the mild winter air human voices had a peculiar soft radiance. There was no roar of traffic and trade, no harsh cry of labor in this place. The fair city of the Nation midway between the suave Southland and the stern North, with the broad breast of the continent at its feet, — mountain, valley, and plain, — what more inspiring point in the whole round globe than this for a man in the full force of his being!

A little lad standing on the top step with his small hand in the bony hand of a bent old man was peering with wonder at the lofty dome and saying: —

“Grandfather, is that where laws are made for all the people?”

“Yes, son.”

“Who makes the laws?”

“The people make their own laws, son.”

“For everybody?”


“Yes — for you and me and all the people.”

And the old man with the little lad passed on toward the halls of Congress to witness this mighty operation.

Gossom crossed the terrace after them, arm in arm with Nathaniel Butterfield, — silk-hatted, frock-coated gentlemen, with the red blush of contented good health on their freshly shaven faces. They were to attend the meeting of a scientific society, created by the bounty of a rich citizen, and before their august business began they would pay a little visit to the Senate offices. They paused on the terrace not far from Hugh, and gazed admiringly on the beautiful scene. Gossom's expansive heart swelled with patriotic pride whenever his errands took him to the national capital. He glowed with satisfaction in the bigness, the volume, the richness of it all.

“Ninety millions, almost!” he murmured. “Another generation, and there will be a hundred and fifty millions of human beings in this country. Marvellous!” He beheld them now, — their numberless gaping mouths clamoring for the goods pictured in the magazines, their veins inoculated with Desire through education. And behind them he saw mills, warehouses, factories, railroads throbbing with their efforts to satisfy this itching want of a nation. It was a vision of colossal appetite!

“A great country, this!” he sighed in the sympathetic ear



of Butterfield. "If they'll only get this tariff fixed, so that business won't be disturbed."

In the Gossom faith, to be busy meant Prosperity, and Prosperity meant Happiness. And his good God blessed those who had attained Prosperity, and hence Happiness. The university president, who was cherishing secret ambitions for diplomacy, swelled in tune with Gossom.

"I'm told," he said importantly, "that it will be practically Senator Dexter's bill and acceptable to the chief business interests of the country," etc., etc. And they passed on under the dome.

O Benjamin Gossom, once a shabby lad in a little country village, with a hunger for books and reverence for the printed word! O Nathaniel, once an ardent pleader for political justice, keen critic of "the tariff-trough," where are the dreams of thy youth, Nathaniel? . . .

The people were coming up the steps more thickly now, as the morning drew on, not merely clerks and stenographers, but legislators themselves, chatting the gossip of the day, or displaying to the wondering eyes of constituents the magnificence of government. The corridors within the Capitol became full of these leisurely legislators, — the people's eyes and minds and hearts. Hugh Grant, following the stream toward the Senate, stopped at the small doorway of the Supreme Court, before which had gathered already a crowd of the curious. For to-day the much-discussed Power Case was to be argued orally before this highest court.

Within the small hall of final justice there was a mellow, subdued light that seemed dim after the full sunshine outside. Hugh took his seat upon one of the sober benches amid the whispering spectators. The centre of the little room was well filled with lawyers and court attendants, and a few ladies richly dressed in furs occupied a reserved bench across the room. As the clock crept on toward the hour

set for the proceedings, the curious pushed at the doors to get at least a glimpse of the scene. Idle senators and congressmen strolled in from their halls to chat with the members of the bar. There was an air of fluttered excitement, unaccustomed in this dim, dignified chamber of justice, — as at a fashionable wedding, a public funeral, an opera. For the Rainbow Falls case — popularly known as the Power Case — was celebrated in its day, though since forgotten in the dust of fresher battles between strong and weak. Then it was a significant skirmish in the eternal conflict, so felt by “Big Business” throughout the country, and therefore eagerly watched by its servants, — the eminent counsel, who had hastened hither this winter day from the larger centres of the country. These were exchanging greetings, jesting among themselves, while the special gladiators of the fray consulted apart.

At last the hand of the clock had travelled over its face and pointed to noon. There was a hush; the spectators rose to their feet as the judges filed in silently and took their seats behind the bench of high justice. Old men, these, demurely robed in black, — white-haired, bent, fragile old men. As they settled themselves in their padded chairs, the clerk droned the ancient formula, — the call to the bar of justice. “All who seek justice of the Supreme Court of the United States shall now draw near and plead their cause.” This vestige of the ceremonious past sounded strangely in a practical age.

As the spectators sat, a little man, stoop-shouldered and gray, took his place at the table in face of the Chief Justice and cleared his throat. A justice leisurely wiped his glasses, and with a long bony finger dipped into the pages of the voluminous brief. In those six fat volumes of briefs and in the ponderous “record” of the case in the lower courts may be found the minute chronicle of this celebrated cause, dead

and dusty already, full of affidavit and citation, testimony and points of law. The tale lies buried there in a flood of language, a tangled maze of detail. . . .

"I hope," whispered a little woman at Hugh's elbow, "that Fred got a bite of something—a cup of coffee anyway!" She must be wife, sister, or friend of the stoop-shouldered lawyer now addressing the court in halting periods.

"I'm sure he'll do well!" her friend replied, encouragingly.

The little man was telling the story of the great power company, revealing its origin, its growth, its methods, — a story in which Hugh recognized his own small part.

"So, your honors," he was saying, "these men with unlimited power of capital are stealthily, secretly reaching out, here, there, getting their hands upon these precious properties, with cunning, fraud." . . .

Thomas Talbot, the tips of his plump fingers meeting, leaned back in his chair, listening to the fervid pleading of his opponent, a little smile of irony and content on his placid face, as if he were saying, "Come now, — you don't really believe that! It's for effect!" Now and then one of the old men on the bench opened his eyes and asked a question. The spectators within the little room became restless, pushing back and forth through the swinging doors, and the gray-haired lawyer stammered on, his halting periods coming forth more laboredly, as if he were conscious of losing ground, seeking desperately to phrase in a few words the whole long story of fraud and trickery that he had carefully unravelled, trying to convince these remote old men of the hot reason within him for doing justice. The little man seemed to have taken his cause to heart.

"It's a great speech!" said one of the women beside Hugh to the other.

But across the room some women in furs were chatting

with one of Talbot's assistants and laughing. One with cap and coat of a striped fur that made her look like a lithe animal waved her muff in a little gesture of mockery, mimicking the tense gesture of the speaking lawyer. As she dropped her arm, Hugh saw her face, rosy and laughing, tipped with fur. It was Alexandra. She had come to witness the legal battle. A dark man with fine features leaned forward and said something that made her laugh.

Hugh knew they were making merry over the passionate plea. "If your honors please," stammered the lawyer. But their honors did not please. One sharply interrupted the laboring pleader, with a question that broke his story clearly in two, waving his point aside as irrelevant. Talbot turned, broadly smiling, and looked at a distinguished colleague seated behind him. A sleek Senator who had been standing before the door went out. It was the straw that showed the mind of the court. The hour to be consumed by the counsel for the government was nearly at an end, and while the little gray-haired man gesticulated with clenched fist and stammered, the judges on the bench seemingly had lapsed into sleep.

"Is it law or equity you are discussing?" demanded a lean justice, irritably unclosing his eyes.

There was a murmur of suppressed merriment among the lawyers over the discomfiture of the pleader. Shortly thereafter, with a despairing period about "this injustice to be perpetrated upon unborn generations," the People rested their case.

Then more spectators tried to enter the crowded room, word having gone forth that the real argument was about to begin. Thomas Talbot took the place at the plaintiff's desk in face of the judges, and with a deprecatory movement of the palms of his hand began in a mellow, liquid voice, — that tone of cultivated reasonableness with which

he had defended philosophical idealism against the materialists in his talk with Hugh.

"If your honors please!"

A thrill of expectant attention ran through the crowded room. At last the play had begun! Alexandra leaned forward, resting her furs upon the bench before her. Her lips were parted in that little smile Hugh remembered so well, the little smile of eager interest in the coming thing.

With a gesture of the open palms which seemed to say, "You see, your honors, how simple this matter really is!" Talbot tossed in his fine irony that unlucky last cry of his opponent. "We are not here," said the learned Talbot, "to try a case for 'unborn generations'; we are concerned with the present, and with the laws that govern that present! What is that law?" With the thrust of this demand he plunged at once into the constitutional argument. Those judges who had listened to the opening plea with shut eyes, as if mummies, sat forward upon their chairs in absorbed attention. At last the question was to be presented to them in the guise in which they could recognize it. Talbot's plump little figure dilated with bursting energy; the palms of his hands flashed upwards in their deprecatory gesture. "You see, your honors, the point is this, not that old wives' tale of wrong and abuse of power!" The strain of attention became breathless as he wound rapidly into his contentions. It was a great speech, a superb legal argument, and as he proceeded the conviction filled the room like a wave of ether that the case was being won — for the power company. No matter what it had done, that law under which it had been tried and found guilty in the lower court must be declared void by this, the highest tribunal of all. Thus the rapid fire of Talbot's irreproachable logic demolished the emotional defence of the people's cause.

Hugh, unmindful of the querulous remarks of the woman

next him, unmindful of the brilliant face across the room, absorbed in Talbot's relentless logic, knew that the power case was won — and lost. Fraud there might be, monopoly, doubtless; injustice and oppression, perhaps. "But the plaintiffs must find relief, if relief be needed, under the common law." The law was such and so — feeble human device of words with dubious meanings to restrain the passions and regulate the rights of men!

"The guarantees of the Constitution," the lawyer was saying, his rich voice rolling up to the ceiling as he pronounced the magic words. "The plaintiffs would confiscate Property!" It was as clear as the sunlight falling across the bench of high justice, as clear as the bony face of the old judge on the extreme right, what the decree of the court must be. As the peroration of the great argument swelled forth, Hugh caught sight of Senator Dexter in the press of congressmen who had crowded in for the fall of the curtain on the celebrated case. A little smile rippled over his sardonic lips. He was leaning against the screen, his hands clasped behind his back, and his sharp eyes travelled up and down the bench as though to assure himself of the result, then fell upon the face of Alexandra, and his smile broadened perceptibly in answer to her triumphant nod. Their side had "made good"! To Hugh it seemed that he had been wafted back to the game in the meadow beside the river years before, and immediately a dumb protest rose in the heart of the man as it had risen then in the heart of the youth, — a dumb, unreasoned protest against the winning side. . . .

And yet it was the law! The old men upon the bench, with aged faces, remote, removed from the passions and the interests of ordinary men, would render the decree according to the principles of law, as nearly as any human minds could do so. No doubt of that, no question of the rectitude

and the dignity of these human instruments in declaring what is the law. But suddenly in the mind of this one man sounded insistently the question, — is the law all? Is there not a vaster realm, the realm of human justice, altogether beyond the law?

"Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." . . . Talbot was finally rounding to his oratorical close, permitting himself a few of those mouth-filling phrases that he usually disdained. "The right of men to do with their own what they will," he dared throw out, "the right of ability to reap its abundant reward, — 'tis the corner-stone of our liberties, not to be lightly legislated from us by irresponsible and envious men! . . . We move, your honors, therefore, etc." The great case of the people against the Rainbow Falls Power Company *et al.* was at an end.

Hugh sat on in a trance, not heeding the applause murmur in the courtroom as admiring counsel gathered about Thomas Talbot, rendering the homage of mind to mind. With the final periods of this fine intellect there had been severed the bond that had bound Hugh to the power company, in whose service he had made his career. That, too, had been decided.

It was as simple, this process, as the bar of sunshine falling over the empty seat of the chief justice. Talbot had convinced him what must be his way, as doubtless he had convinced the court what was the law.

It comes to men in diverse times and places, — the light for their souls. It comes in the dim mystery of cathedral aisles, upon crowded city streets, in the silence of deep forests upon the mountains, at night within their beds. It comes in fierce strife, in lonely meditation — the light, the truth for them. It came to Hugh Grant here in the crowded courtroom, it rang in the mellow voice of agile jurisprudence, — his light, after groping in darkness, the light he had searched for.

At last he rose from the bench in the nearly empty court-room and stumbled toward the entrance unseeing, unmindful of the laughter and the voices from the little group drawing near the door. As he passed behind the screen a hand was laid lightly on his arm, and he looked up into the eyes of Alexandra, — those laughing, triumphant eyes that had exchanged glances with the Senator. He had forgotten her existence.

"Will you speak to me?" she exclaimed with friendly imperiousness. "I have been beckoning to you and calling to you, but you seem lost in a maze."

Senator Dexter, who was talking with the dark young man that had been seated beside Alexandra, now turned his shrewd eyes on Hugh. He was saying:—

"Yes, it was a great argument, Baron."

Alexandra, catching the phrase from the Senator's lips, repeated brightly to Hugh:—

"It was a great argument!"

"Yes," he assented, "it was no doubt a great argument."

"It settles that," the Senator was saying.

His shrewd eyes twinkled as he stroked his mustache with the air of one for whom these little affairs no longer had anything momentous, of one who had lived so long behind the scenes that his only pleasure was the effect of the outer show upon less informed persons like Alexandra and the foreign nobleman.

Talbot was talking with Alexandra's companion, a young woman with a full, sensuous face, clothed from head to foot in a garment of superb fur. The soft fingers of her ungloved hand were covered with jewels that sparkled as she gracefully gesticulated.

"The Countess Gervana," Alexandra murmured to Hugh, indicating her companion, "wife of the Hungarian ambassador — charming creature! That is her brother, Baron

Sez—" Hugh lost the name. The Baron, a man with mobile lips and self-possessed carriage, was saying in reply to the Senator's remarks:—

"Yes, I find it all very interesting." But he was looking at Alexandra with quiet persistence. . . .

As they moved down the crowded corridor toward the Senate wing, the old soldier, with the little lad still dragging wearily at his hand, passed them, and the child's voice urged plaintively, "I don't want to see any more!" . . .

"It was a great case," Alexandra repeated idly, her eyes restlessly wandering from one face to another, even out to the passers-by, as if ever seeking something of glowing interest that she might catch. "It was a superb argument!" she added to the lawyer.

"Oh, it was all as plain as a pikestaff," Talbot purred deprecatingly. "It hardly needed argument."

Such was the verdict of authority.

XXIII

THE BRONZE IMAGE

THE sun was declining goldenly over the fair city as they came out of the Capitol under the granite portico. Talbot glanced at his watch, saying:—

"Here I must leave you to get my train. Coming back to the City, Grant?"

Hugh, roused from the reverie into which he had again lapsed, shook his head. He had no distinct idea of immediate action, but in the mood in which he found himself he desired only to be alone, not the travel companion of the genial Talbot.

"Well, I must be in the City to-morrow," the lawyer said, and with a cordial smile, his noble head bobbing on his fat neck, trotted off on his way, holding his little bag tightly in one hand. That bag contained "The City of God," as Hugh might recall. It also contained a box of excellent cigars, a catalogue of rare books, and a letter from a nursery firm concerning bulbs and shrubs that this disciple of philosophical idealism would buy for his river "farm."

The Senator captured the countess and her brother, and Hugh found himself before a panting car, into which Alexandra stepped, indicating the seat beside her.

"I'll show you something of this lovely city," she said. "I want to talk with you."

He took the seat and wrapped the heavy fur robe about him, his mind still in the grip of conviction that had seized

him in the courtroom. For the first time he was scarcely conscious of the woman at his side. He did not know the rumors of the gossiping capital that the daughter of Alexander Arnold had already accepted the suit of the Baron, deftly furthered by his sister. Even had Alexandra herself confirmed this gossip, it would have made slight impression upon him to-day — another unreality in a world of shifting shadows.

Alexandra lightly designated the beautiful vista before them as the car descended the hill.

"I want to talk to you," she repeated. "I was watching your face this afternoon after I discovered that you were there. And I could not understand it. Were you not pleased — it must mean so much to you!" she concluded bluntly.

"Talbot made a great argument," he repeated mechanically.

"Senator Dexter said that the court must render a favorable decision."

"No doubt."

She gave him a puzzled glance.

"Was there ever any doubt of the outcome?" he added, as though to himself.

"Then you should be pleased!"

But he neither smiled nor spoke.

"I love to see strong men use their minds," she continued vivaciously. "That's the extraordinary interest of this place. There are always so many brilliant men here, — men who do things."

"And you love above all else 'men who do things.'"

"Of course! Here you can watch them work, instead of seeing only the results, as in the City."

She hummed a little air to herself while the car shot over the smooth pavements.

A company of troops clattered past in dress uniform, and

in the usual drab stream of wayfarers on the pavements appeared officers and strange, foreign figures. From passing cars flashed forth the faces of young women and fine-featured men in fur coats. Whatever sparkle could be got from democracy was to be seen here where the new land touched old ones.

Alexandra nodded and tossed greetings hither and thither. She pointed out notable houses along the avenues.

"That's Senator Dyer's—the big colonial one on the corner, and on the opposite side is the Hungarian ambassador's."

Before the stone steps carriages and cars were drawn up in file.

"I should be there," she said lightly. "But we will go on into the country. There is time—plenty of time!"

They whirled up a little hill, past a large new stone house that was set somewhat apart from its smaller neighbors.

"Where we live," she said. "It looks as if it had been taken bodily from the Champs Élysées, doesn't it?"

Her face, warmly pressed by the striped furs, glowed with the wind of their motion, and her brilliant eyes glanced now here, now there, in quick, expectant search.

"See!" She pointed to a broad field beside the river. "The flying machines!"

An ugly winged monster rose into the air, turned and circled the plain a few feet above the earth.

"How I should like to try that! A Frenchman promised to take me up some day. It must be the most wonderful thing in life—flying."

While the car shot on to the hills beyond the city which sparkled in places with snow, she talked of the "men who did things," whom she knew,—government officials, cabinet officers, diplomats, senators,—displaying a ready knowledge of this new life which she had grasped as she had grasped all in her varied path.

"It is so stimulating, — so full of life!"

He made no remark.

The car stopped on the wooded crest of a hill beyond the city. Below, the river wound in a great sweeping curve between them and the Virginia hills. The brilliant winter sun in its setting fell athwart the severe shaft of the monument, flooding the field where the flying machine circled. Nearer were the peopled hills, and just below in a grove of ancient oaks an old mansion faced the city. It was Senator Dexter's place, as Alexandra explained. Here he retired from the cares of state and cultivated his lovely garden.

"He's so unlike what the public thinks," she said, with the air of superior insight; "a very simple man, really."

She had loosened her furs and leaned forward, resting her face upon her hands, contemplating the beautiful scene of hill and city and river, a smile of unappeased zest upon her face. Thus they sat silently for some moments, absorbed in the view.

Already the presence of this woman by his side, rich, abundant, sensuous, with her mobile joy in all living, had penetrated the man like incense, — clouding the clear light of the afternoon in which the voice of justice had spoken within him.

"So," she said softly after a time, "you were not content with your victory!"

"It was not mine."

"You can make it yours!"

She turned swiftly on him with provoking suggestion.

"I could make it mine?"

"The men here are the ones who have made the most of such victories."

"Yes," he assented, with a smile for the memory of the victory beside the river, "the strong win!"

"Senator Dexter was a clerk in a store, they say."

"That must have been long ago."

"The pace is faster now."

"And the prizes greater."

After another silence she said lightly:—

"You must stay over for my party, Monday week — it is to be very grand. You will see the whole show."

"I leave to-night!" he replied quickly. "I have seen — the show."

"Why do you leave? What is it?" Her dancing eyes contracted, and the warmth faded from her vivid face. She added in a low, whispered tone, "Why do you make me like this? I don't want to be serious! You are too serious, too serious, my friend. Take your life lightly, with a smile and a jest. It is all a great show!"

The man's stern eyes devoured her, and he laughed a toneless, mirthless laugh. "Yes, I am serious! Too serious for your world — I should not fit."

"I could make you love it — my world!"

"Because I love you."

"It's foolish to be dull and serious. There's too much life going on — just get in and swim! Don't you feel it in the air? One touches the world here."

"The world!" he laughed scornfully. "Its masters and their servants."

"I like the masters," she retorted. "They are the men who do things, the ones who live!"

"Live at the expense of others. . . . You did not understand the meaning behind the words spoken in the courtroom. You thought merely that Talbot's speech was brilliant, convincing. You admired his words. You could not see that they were a tissue of verbal evasions to cover decently the selfish deeds of men."

He told the story of the great power company as he knew it, and at the end she said:—

"That is just life: the strong win. They must!"

She looked at him defiantly, gathering her furs about her. "Men must fight for something. And the best win — that is all. My father won. I have lived always with strong people, who could rise above the shoulders of the crowd. They are leaders because they cannot help themselves. They make life what it is for all of us, and then make it better, — slowly, — better, more interesting, more worth living, more full of sensation. They harness the clouds. They make bread for the rest to eat. They make beauty, luxury, power — all that I love!" . . .

"And the man who wins you must be like them?"

Her eyes met his with a spark of fire.

"He must be a MAN!"

"To be a man is to triumph at the trough."

"Come — I will not let you spoil my splendid humor this afternoon. I am to dine to-night — with a man!"

In the hard glint of her eyes all mirth had faded, and she had become at once the mature woman, who saw and judged.

"Now we must hurry home."

The car shot down the curving road through wooded ravines, past streams gurgling in their snowy beds. As they touched the edge of the city, Alexandra gave the driver a direction, and the car paused at the gate of a cemetery.

"There is a wonderful thing here you must see — a bronze figure. It always reminds me of you!"

She led the way in the falling twilight through the deserted paths to a little enclosure of dark trees. Stepping within the shrouded space, they stood in face of the seated figure.

"Look!"

The faint twilight there behind the dark trees deepened the gloom and the mystery of the bronze face beneath its heavy covering. The figure, neither man nor woman, seated in contemplation, looked through them and beyond

into the gathering night. In the presence of that sombre, seated figure in silent, perpetual contemplation, there came to the man again that sense of conviction, — ultimate, inescapable. . . . He stood there before its gaze, rooted, forgetful of time.

"How I hate it," Alexandra murmured, turning away. "Hate her, him! It is fate!"

"It is the truth!"

He looked into the dark eyes of the bronze image, and they gazed through him, as if seeking issues vast, beyond.

"No!" the woman cried. "Don't say it. Not yet!" And, as if before the searching gaze of the bronze figure, her tongue was loosened in defiance, she spoke rapidly, "I know you mean to do something foolish — that is why you are going away to-night?"

She laid her hand upon his arm, as if she would restrain him, hold him back from some irrevocable course, some parting of the ways. "Not yet — wait! You may not have the whole truth!"

He answered the deep eyes of the bronze face.

"The moment comes when a man sees all the truth there is for him, and then he must act."

"No!" she protested, turning away, hastily retreating from the dark circle. Without further words they returned to the lighted city. When the motor stopped before the gray stone house, Alexandra spoke swiftly, as if she had been meditating the words carefully: —

"You must do nothing final now — nothing irrevocable that will ruin your life. You must not give up all that you have won — all the opportunity you have — until — until —"

He waited.

"Until I have seen you again! Promise me."

"I do not expect to see you again."

"Yes — my party — eight days — promise me!"

She pleaded as for herself.

"Only eight days!"

"Then I will be here!"

He felt the warm touch of her soft hand in his, binding his promise. With a lingering look she mounted the steps of her father's house, and disappeared behind the doors.

XXIV

THE TROUGH

IN that basement restaurant where Senator and tourist, magnate and newspaper correspondent, jostle one another for necessary nourishment, Percy Todd was seated at a little table with the correspondent of the *Daily Judgment*, — one Stott, whose philosophical observations on the state of the nation, in a vein of tempered cynicism, delighted the readers of his metropolitan paper. To him a Senator was but a man like another. He had seen him eat chicken pie and drink tepid tea, fill pages of the *Record* with windy eloquence, and vote according to his purse, for too many years to retain any illusions. The country must be governed, and somehow it got governed from administration to administration, in much the same easy fashion, in spite of muttering thunders of popular disapproval. The people might growl, but they got what they voted for. So in the case of this great tariff bill, which had slowly wound itself through hearing and committee and was now at the climax of its fate upon the floor of the Senate, the newspaper man smiled his languid smile of "inside" knowledge at the patriotic frothing of his younger brethren of the pen. It was always thus when the fat came to the fire in a matter like this, where the fire of selfish interest was hot and the fat rich. After the smoke cleared away the heavens would still be there and the sun shining. In this vein he entertained the young editor of *Ambition* with choice scandal concerning the public figures that crowded into the marble-floored room.

Percy Todd, ever exhilarated by proximity with important people, listened, revolving in his busy mind another portrait of the "Builders of Empire" series which had won fame for his venture in journalism. These articles had brought him into relations of quasi-intimacy with many prominent persons.

"I have seen these men at close range," he said to Stott. "They have talked very freely with me, taken me into their confidence, I may say. They are not the selfish, inhuman machines that the public likes to think them. They are patriots in their way — and good fellows, charitable, genial, cultivated, and that's the way I have tried to present them — sympathetically."

Stott smiled and nodded.

"A reformer," he remarked wisely, "is a public nuisance. He doesn't understand the game as it is played."

"He is an hysteric!" Todd chimed in.

"Isn't that Oliver Whiting with Senator Dexter?" the newspaper man asked. "I wonder what he can be doing here." His sense of news, whetted in an atmosphere of closet intrigue, was touched. "Who is the youngish man with them?"

"Hugh Grant, — I know him, one of the power crowd."

"Something must be up," Stott pronounced. "Whiting represents the bank crowd, of course; but usually Dexter goes to him. I suppose the Senator couldn't get away just now."

If the Metternich of the Senate — as the newspapers liked to call Senator Dexter — had aught to say of weighty importance to Oliver Whiting, this surely was not the opportunity he would have chosen. They had met by accident in the thronged corridor as any two gentlemen might meet, and stopped to chat, unaware of the excitement they were causing the journalists by their presence.

where the aid of great capitalists had been evoked. Metternich had returned with an ultimatum, counted his men, and now to-day, to-night, this stupendous work of art over which the legislators of the nation had labored for months was to become LAW.

"It will be the law," mused Hugh Grant. "Who made it?"

"The people made it," the correspondent stoutly maintained. "And it is good enough — as good as you can make with popular institutions."

"What in hell is copper sulphides?" Todd inquired.

"You can't please every one," Stott insisted, ignoring the request for information.

"No — you can't please every one who wants to feed at the trough."

The journalist perceived dimly through the whiskey blur of the late afternoon that this friend of Todd's was just "another damned idealist" — a queer one to travel with the power company crowd.

"You have to cut the fodder as best you can," he stammered. "And Dexter is as fair a fellow at that trick as any one else."

It was time to dress, afterwards to repair to the Capitol to witness the last act of the grand opera now beginning, and after the curtain was rung down there to go on to Alexandra's ball, for which he had returned to Washington. Stott took Todd to his club. The correspondent had thriftily prepared "his patter" for the *Daily Judgment* in the forenoon, sagely predicting in the quiet of his office the course of public events. To-morrow one might read in that conservative metropolitan sheet of the "superior statesmanship displayed by Senator Dexter in harmonizing the conflicting interests of this vast country." . . .

Meanwhile another man than the ingenuous patriot who

had mounted the granite steps that winter morning ten days before was walking through the soft Southern night toward the starry dome. He was going to see the will of his country expressed in law, but now he knew how law was made.

He was waiting—for what? A word from a woman. As if that could transform a world! Oliver Whiting, omnivorous gossip, had given him the rumor,—“a diplomatic marriage” for the daughter of Alexander Arnold. “One of those black-and-tan puppies running all over here,” the banker growled, in the tone of one who also dared aspire. To-night, in all probability, it would be made clear. And why this woman’s whim that he should be present at another’s triumph? . . . Even were it not true, Oliver’s report, how could there be hope for *him*? Since that moment when they had stood before the bronze image, the decree of his fate had been plain. . . . But man plays with himself, ever cherishing the secret hope of miracle for *him*.

The houses and the great public buildings slept in the moonlight. Beyond the river snowy fields reached out to distant horizons. All was now in repose, except the lighted hill of the Capitol, toward which were rushing people in cars and carriages. There the fierce activity of men was centred,—the desires, wills, intrigues, compromises, battles, tricks, pretensions,—there beneath the dome of the Capitol.

“A system of enlightened self-interest,—the American idea,” as President Butterfield had happily characterized the national spirit. Each one was seeking within his sphere to make the most of himself, striving to prevail—for what? Not for justice, not for equal dealing between men, but for his selfish advantage in the great game of life, for self and a few more that could be felt as part of self. Greed, legalized, admired, that was the “spirit of the country,” in flower here at Washington about the “trough.” . . .

The strains of music from a military band came floating

itself expressed, arise and utter one word of truth? . . . Would the voice of the people be heard about this matter, once? There were growls from an impotent minority, even from within the party itself, protests against certain schedules. A Senator from the South bitterly inveighed against the treatment accorded "copper sulphides," which it seemed was dear to the pockets of his people. But the parliamentary steps went forward irrevocably to their conclusion, debate being limited. It was a party measure, of that party which was overwhelmingly in power, of that party which traditionally for generations had represented the property classes of the country. It was a party measure, and the country was wearily waiting for the expected to happen. Debate was useless. . . . Thus the play progressed to its climax, with a spurt of fire here and there, sufficient to keep personal warmth in the formal proceedings.

Then the voice came. A Senator from one of the new states, a rugged, homely man, in striking contrast with the elegant Metternich, had risen. Suddenly the conversational tone of the chamber was hushed. That indescribable silence descended which indicates human attention to something of passionate truth.

"This bill is an act of intolerable injustice! You Senators from old states do not understand your country, the whole big country! You listen to the greedy voices of the few. This act is designed not to protect the wage-earner, not to provide the nation with the necessary means for self-development, but to swell the fortunes of the few already fabulously large, — to enable capital to take still larger toll from the multitude. . . . But let me tell you that the people of this country, of which you are profoundly ignorant, think! Yes, the common man thinks — thinks slowly, but surely. And he knows that his life is being taxed from him, the fruit of his toil; that he and

his children are paying for the prosperity, the luxury of you and your children. It is a few cents here and there. But every article that he must use is taxed. His clothes, his implements, his food, his few luxuries, his many necessities, — they are all taxed. You are taking his life blood and that of his wife and children, in order that you may add to the enjoyments of your lives. He is giving his life for yours. . . . It is a life for a life, gentlemen."

Senator Dexter had been shuffling some papers during this speech, and now looked up with a little smile. The speaker turned upon him as the one personally responsible for the evil deed and repeated, "Yes, a life for a life! And how long do you expect that the common, the average, the little man will submit to give his life for *yours*?"

The pretty woman beside Hugh moved restlessly. She was becoming bored by this prolonged talk about "business," impatient for the final roll-call that would release them for the ball. Hugh's hands were gripping the velvet rail in tense feeling. Every word of the bitter protest left its mark upon him. "A life for a life!" That phrase roused strange echoes within his memory.

He caught the interested face of Alexandra looking down upon the scene. She was intelligent enough to understand the meaning of the hot protest, but she knew also the sophisticated counter-arguments. Her face expressed that indifferent tolerance of the experienced one, listening to futile talk about a "thing already judged." It was the plaint of the defeated, the unsuccessful, — all the "others." There was a curve of mildly supercilious scorn to her beautiful mouth. . . .

There followed a scorching arraignment of the methods pursued in making the bill. . . . "Abominable bargains . . . an act designed in fraud!" . . .

And all this about a few cents here and there, disgusting

make a few hundred millionaires, a few thousand more who can dine every night in evening clothes. . . . Come with me to-night on a little journey, and I will complete your education. I will show you the process of prosperity. I will show you luxury in the making. Will you come?"

"I have an engagement —"

"I know! You are on the way to the Arnolds' ball, like most of these. Do you expect to complete your man's education there?"

"Perhaps!"

"From the lips of a woman?"

Hugh made no reply, and they descended the avenue together, the Anarch's hand in tight grip upon his companion's arm. The stream of motors and carriages raced past them continuously, heading for the residence quarter. They overtook groups of men loitering in discussion of the great bill.

"It's out of the way, anyhow," a man said wearily, "and business can go ahead. That's the main thing."

"He means," observed the Anarch, "that the stock market will buzz to-morrow and will swallow some more millions of paper securities, and so the country is saved! Noble patriot! The country is full of them. They see visions of profits, — motors and houses, food and women. The country is saved daily for them!"

"Would you or I do better if we were in their place?"

"I forget," the Anarch said, with a sneer, "that you draw your profits from the scheme of things as they are. Your power company has just won its case in the highest court, I see. You are on your way to the feast of the plunderers to celebrate the victory at the national trough. And you are thinking of the beautiful one, daughter of luxury, whom you dare to love. You must go far and fast, my foundling, to marry Alexandra Arnold!"

Hugh drew his arm from the Anarch's grasp with sudden revulsion. The rough hand in its careless sweep had touched too deep. He might say to himself a thousand times that this woman was no more within his world than a distant star, — bright creature of another sphere. But the man's will to possess rose whenever challenged by another. It was for her that he lingered there — to look upon her once more.

"Be honest," Wethered urged. "Look yourself in the face like a man. You want her. Do you want *this* also?"

They had reached the entrance to that stately stone house on the avenue where Alexander Arnold lived. It gleamed into the night brightly from its many windows, and already a long line of cars had formed outside the gate upon the avenue and was slowly crawling to the steps. The curious had gathered about the tall iron palings and packed close around the gates, held back by the police from entering the strip of drive.

Hugh passed inside, admitted by the warrant of his garment, but his companion was questioned, and after some difficulty overtook him at the steps. He laid his hand again upon Hugh's arm.

"If you will not come now, I must wait!"

A servant in livery turned the shabby stranger from the door.

"Get out!" he said.

Some of the alighting guests looked at the bearded fellow, with the cold gaze of those whose sense of propriety has been offended. A policeman came up from the gate and hustled the unbidden one from the stone steps. Wethered protested.

"I tell you, friend," he said in a cool, provoking tone, "I know the people in there well, but I have no intention of thrusting myself into their feast. Take your hand away!"

There was a scuffle, and Wethered was dragged towards the gate. Hugh ran down the drive while the curious guests in their waiting carriages looked on and made talk. Wethered clung to the spokes of the fence, resisting the efforts of the police — there were two of them now — to drag him from the precincts of the feast. Hugh said to the officers: —

“I know him. I will see that he makes no trouble.”

The man who held the Anarch, observing upon Hugh the proper garments of respectability, released his hold, saying: —

“He looked like a bad one.”

“Why do you make a row?” Hugh demanded impatiently.

“I had no intention of disturbing the social peace, my correct young friend,” Wethered replied mockingly. “I merely resented the harsh manners of the hireling, which after all are no worse than his masters’.”

The two retreated to the gate, where the Anarch, leaning against the palings, pointed upwards to the lighted ballroom through whose open windows could be seen the forms of men and women.

“Behold! The feast of the plunderers.”

As they stood there silently watching the scene, the doors that opened upon a little balcony swung back and a woman came forward from the flood of light in the room and leaned upon the stone railing. Hugh recognized Alexandra. She was so near that he might speak to her; she was breathing the night air, watching the flashing line of cars on the avenue below. He could see her gown of pale silver, shining with little points of light, and the wreath of gold and jewels in her hair. She turned as though to reënter the lighted room, but paused, her arm raised, gazing down toward the two at the gates.

“There she is!” whispered the Anarch. “Another great Symbol, like the fiery text you once read from my room. The symbol of plunder. Adorned with the sweat and the blood

of her fellows, how beautiful she is! There is not a thread upon her body, not a drop of blood in her veins, not a tone in her perfect voice that is not taken from the life of some other nameless, unknown one. Life has been spilt prodigally for her triumph. She is the sacrifice of the people. . . . Will you go in to her and give her your homage?"

Hugh's eyes were fixed upon the bright figure above them. A man had come from the room behind and joined her. She met him with a smile. He took her fan and pointed out into the sky. They turned back into the ball room. . . .

The stream of guests filed in between the gates, — Senators, Congressmen, diplomats, men of fame and women of beauty; all that was notable in the capital was gathering to-night in the house of Alexander Arnold. Among them Hugh caught sight of that rugged spokesman for the people whose words of protest at the trough had sunk into his heart. . . . A servant closed the long windows in the ballroom above, shutting out the light.

"Will you come now?" demanded the Anarch.

The uneasy officer of the law, disturbed by the presence of the shabby fellow within the gate, ordered him roughly to take himself off.

"Come now — move on!"

"The word of march," Wethered jested. "Friend," he said to the officer, "a cat may look at a king, as the saying is. A plain man may stare at the house of a millionaire."

"Not inside these grounds. Get out that gate, I say."

"Suppose I should refuse? Suppose I should march up that vestibule and enter those doors? Although I might be an unbidden guest, I tell you there are those within who must receive me."

"Here — stop your jaw!"

The officer of the law laid a hand upon the Anarch's

shoulder and shoved him unceremoniously into the gutter. Wethered raised his fist threateningly, then with a laugh turned away.

"Not yet — not here!" he muttered.

A heavy car, floundering like a double-eyed dragon on the slippery pavement, would have caught Hugh, had Wethered not reached out a strong arm and pulled him from before the panting machine. In the glare of the great lights he saw two men, — Senator Dexter and Oliver Whiting. The Senator's eyes were fixed upon the Anarch as if in recognition, while the banker, leaning from the car, hailed Hugh in surprise.

"Where are you going?"

The motor shot forward into the narrow drive, and the faces of the two gentlemen, each expressing concern and astonishment, disappeared.

"Come with me!" said the Anarch.

XXVI

"COME WITH ME!"

THUS there began for Hugh Grant the phantasy of a dream. Neither time nor place in all that strange pilgrimage with the Anarch could ever be clearly recalled afterward. It was like the leaves of a thick book of pictures, — each distinct, each peopled with its own world of human beings, each burned indelibly upon his brain. And from the panoramic whole, as it unwound in their wandering from day to day, the lesson of his guide was learned and entered his heart forever. The night when he turned from the lighted house of mirth, where for a moment he had seen the woman of his desire shining in all her beauty and power, he was still in good part the Youth, with warring impulses and many desires. From this pilgrimage there emerged a Man, — resolute, of steadfast purpose. . . .

Lying in his bed upon the long train he watched the receding City, whither he had come one bright winter afternoon in eager hope and faith. His hope was selfish; his faith was childish ignorance. And they had been taken from him. The city glittered from its lighted avenues. The stars shone thick in the soft darkness of the sky. The great dome of the Capitol, with its spreading wings, brooded over the place, — the temple of a free people. With his eyes upon this he fell asleep, and when he awoke the next morning the train was winding slowly among low hills. Over the wet earth came softly the breath of spring. From the miserable cabins thin streams of bluish smoke curled upward to the blue above the trees. Slatternly women and gaunt men and ragged children

stood in the doorways to watch the express, which like a daily comet whirled along its path across their little world. It was these among all the many millions, mute creatures in forgotten corners, for whom the wise men of the Nation made laws. And it was from these among others that toll was taken by the strong, a few miserable cents in every coin.

Somewhere among these low hills the two left the train and presently entered a black shed where boys and girls picked the broken coal, then descended into the earth in company with a shift of dark-faced, foreign men, — large, dumb, enduring creatures. The Anarch seemed familiar here, as in many places of their journey. He spoke to the men in their own tongue, and the faces of the cattle-like miners answered with humor and fellowship. In the gloom of that underworld he seized pick and shovel and swung them handily, while Hugh Grant, breathing the foul air of the low cavernous passages, coughed in weakness. His guide, shouting hoarsely, explained the matter: —

“This is the famous Alexandra mine! Out of these pits came the first kernels of Alexander Arnold’s great fortune. ’Tis but one of the many mines he controls in this region, but I have brought you here that you may see the dark fount of that golden spring which gushes to adorn the beautiful one we beheld last night!”

Alexandra, creature of light and beauty and joy, had given her name to this fetid pit, whose black dust was transmuted into the tones of her silvery voice, the very waves of her eager mind! Hugh, cowering against the wall of the narrow passage while a blast resounded near him, remembered her standing beside the fish-pond at Paradise Valley, examining the little trout.

“These men,” his guide was saying, — “Croatsians, Slavs, what not, — are beguiled yearly from their forest homes by lying agents in order that they may dig Arnold’s wealth for a

few cents of daily wage. They are the tools of his business, — the human tools. Once, you may remember, they demanded more for themselves, more life for their wives and children, and the company locked them out. They spent their hoarded mite, and the company the millions in its treasury. It was war. But who paid for this private war? You and I and every one who must burn coal — not Alexander Arnold and his associates. Not they — clever devils! The men will fight again and again — for more life; and some day — *we* shall not pay the bill!" The shabby Anarch's eyes glittered in the torchlight.

"Here," he continued, as they stumbled on, "is the entrance to that shaft where some years ago threescore men were caught in a fall. For eighteen days, more than a dozen men endured the gases and the heat, hunger and thirst, in the hope of getting back to the air, to their families. One of them — a Lithuanian Pole — kept their spirits alive with his songs and his prayers. There were heroic deeds in that black hell those eighteen days, — deeds to make tears come at the thought that men can rise so high. And yet they say these miners are little better than beasts! I'd trust my life, the honor of women, with them rather than with their masters! . . . The pit was improperly shored — a petty meanness of the company. It is walled now, and the fire is eating itself out." . . .

In the evil-smelling atmosphere, full of reverberating noise, Hugh became faint, and his guide helped him to the car, in which they quickly shot to the surface, where the wan daylight that filtered through the breaker was grateful.

"Had enough of it? Those fellows are strong; they are hardened to it, ten, twelve, fourteen hours a day, yet they become worn out in ten to fifteen years, if they are not killed before. The waste of life is enormous in our mines. But it is cheaper so, for there are plenty where they come from! Europe breeds labor for us."

And Grant, remembering the suave periods of President Butterfield and other comfortable citizens, who decried "sentimentalism," muttered something about "the margin of food supply," "economic law."

"Economic law!" sneered his guide. "There are other laws, higher even than the economic laws. That phrase was coined to soothe the conscience of capital."

They passed on into the ugly little town hanging to the scrubby hillside below the mine. The dull, sordid grime of the place, even in the spring sunshine, fell like a damp cloud. In an even tone his guide poured forth a volume of figures, examples, anecdotes, explaining the value of "life" in human terms for "those cattle below," — what life meant in units of food, rest, health, pleasure. They entered a saloon where the workers fresh from their shift below were drinking the colored poisons protected by law.

"This is solace for ten hours of the hardest physical labor," Wethered said, pushing a bottle toward his companion. "After that job most of us would like some dissipation to restore the nervous equilibrium." He held the brown liquid to the light before drinking it, remarking, "What beautiful dyes they manufacture these days!" And tossing it off with a grimace he continued to narrate the history of the Alexandra mine, — describing the system of fines, the burden of taxation by which every article of food and clothing, every nail in the miner's wooden shanty, every material object that touched his life, paid toll to some body of men. He told the story of the coal tax, obtained by trickery years before and continued ever since, by means of which fifty cents was added to the price of every ton of coal sold.

They loitered in the murky streets, observing the women and the children, and passed to the blackened hillside while the sun sank behind the gloomy horizon.

"These forlorn hills," — the Anarch waved his hand over

the landscape, — "Arnold got possession of by a trick. They had been in the hands of a poor Southern family, who had owned them for generations — ever since some strong ancestor had grabbed them from the Indians. They were sold to Arnold and a group of his friends by an honest fellow, an old surveyor, who was the agent for the owners, and congratulated himself that he had got a good price for his principals. But Arnold had secretly sent his own agent to examine them, and knew that they were rich in coal. Then he cheated his associates in the "deal," and got the lands for himself. They were immensely valuable — behold! Over a hundred millions of dollars have been taken from these properties, which the old surveyor sold, honestly, for twenty-three thousand dollars — the price of the timber and the soil."

It was the old story heard by Hugh so often in his youth, told with pride by David Grant — his honest stroke of business! The old man was cheated and helped to cheat his poverty-stricken partners, and for this he was given a gold watch and a dinner by Arnold. Honesty knavishly turned to the sole profit of a single man! Hugh laughed.

"They talk much about the creative genius of our great robbers — what they have done for their country. 'Tis a tale for boys! Alexander Arnold never ventured a dollar where he was not certain to reap a hundred or more. He and his kind buy cheap and sell dear. That is all. They never take a risk, never create, — merely buy and sell. He bought coal instead of wood and land — so always!"

"But," Hugh demurred, "these mines are no longer Arnold's private property; they are owned by a great corporation."

The Anarch smiled.

"Child," he said, "the corporation is a device by which under cloak of law responsibility and publicity may be evaded.


"Tis an impersonal means by which men work their wills. . . . The story of this corporation is an interesting one, also with its lesson."

He recounted the building of the corporation out of the isolated mines, its dealings with the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad, wherein Michael Peter Ravi first came into sight, and finally the alliance of railroad and mine in a ruthless war upon all rivals — a tale of past plunder, still pursued, sanctioned by time and custom.

"So they prevailed upon Congress to lay a tax upon all imported coal, and thus was completed what Butterfield calls 'a great economic service for humanity.' Arnold, you know, gave Nick Butterfield a few millions for his university, and he is about to erect for the City a magnificent Museum. Upon the pediment of Ellgood's splendid building should be inscribed the names of those who have given their lives and their children's hopes to build it." He indicated the little mining-town. "Not Alexander Arnold's. The charity of our noble benefactors! It stinks rather worse than their evil deeds."

These were not the tones in which Percy Todd had drawn the portrait of Alexander Arnold in the pages of *Ambition*. That was the heroic picture of a modern Titan, creating wealth for the multitude to enjoy!

Hugh Grant, remembering the fine features of the white-haired man, his calm, searching brown eyes, remembering the joyous grace of Alexandra, felt there was a mystery not fully probed by the Anarch's hot words. Nevertheless, the richness of the woman's white robe, the gold fillet in her hair, seemed tarnished with the soot from this black earth, whence had come her privilege. And as they passed through the sordid streets, there floated around her delicate limbs a mob of brutish Croatians, drunken men and seared women, and the blackened faces of the little gnomes within



the breaker. "We are giving you our lives," they whispered, "and we do not give with love!"

"Alexander Arnold," resumed the Anarch, "it is needless to say, is not the greatest of our noble army of Plunderers. He was not the first; he will not be the last. But he is a perfect type, and inasmuch as fate has brought you closer to him than to others, I have chosen first to expose for your sight his roots. We will see other regions beyond his power. But the meaning is the same, always the same — a life for a life." And Hugh added to himself, "And life given without love is death."

So from the Alexandra mine the two journeyed, over the low hills scarred by mine pits, through broad valleys, to a swift river. This river ran like a crease in a man's hand from the highlands in which the beds of coal lay buried, through the fertile midland plains, — a broad swift stream, colored with the dark soil of the land. Scarcely a century before across the low mountains, down this river bed, had come a hardy race, seeking rich, new fields, desiring broad horizons for themselves and their children. They had poured themselves over the virgin midland plains, conquering nature, until, the land well filled, their children had pushed forth to other lands beyond, and so on across the topmost barrier of the continent until the human tide met the antipodal ocean. Conquest, it was — the spirit of possession, — the glorified spirit of the race, — so often praised, worshipped! First the conquest of stubborn nature. Then, children of this very earth, they had turned their hands against each other in bloody war. Having conquered their mother, they turned upon themselves to slay and eat.

"Mine" and "thine" were the words in their mouths!

Thus, through small towns and cities, through country villages and open fields, the two went. At night in swift trains as they passed lonely farms, with their feeble lights glim-

mering into the dark, the heart of the younger man warmed. In these solitary homes, whose lights glimmered from horizon to horizon across broad states, northward to the lakes and southward to the sea, on these farms still lived men with another spirit. Here upon the bosom of the fertile earth men still lived and labored, bringing forth the increase of the seasons, perpetuating the primal promise to man, in health and simplicity. These little kingdoms of life, each with its woman and her brood, its guiding master, were free from the chains of the plunderers. The Home!

This pretty dream of poetry was sternly shattered by the sharp words of the Anarch. Even here upon the soil itself, it seemed, the laborer was bound inextricably into the complex machine of Society, — the whole. Each depended upon manifold others for existence, as all depended upon him. In every house from which glimmered the torch of life, — feeble light, — the common implements of existence, — food, and tools, raiment and housing, paid toll, — each its mite to the plunderer. Here, as in mine and mill and factory, the strong laid the burdens of their selfish wills upon their fellow-men, from ocean to ocean, across the broad land. . . .

For thus, from the poorest farm, from the barest cottage, up to the starry splendor of Alexandra in her palace at Paradise Valley, life is linked indissolubly with life!

XXVII

"COME WITH ME!"

THEY entered the stockade thrown about the works of a great mill, where an industrial battle was being fought between masters and men, in this peaceful, plentiful, prosperous country. Men with rifles, soldiers of the corporation, patrolled the stockade, and a line of wooden cars housed the rabble brought from the cities to take the places of the men outside. One car was the prison, another the field hospital. About the guarded gate they saw the sullen faces of men, they heard the curses of women. For the bread and meat that makes the blood of life was being taken from them. Like wolves they hung about the walls of their prison, snarling.

"A little skirmish in these piping days of peace," observed the Anarch. "The company has turned the men they have gathered here to work for them into the street in a dispute over wages and the right to hire whom they will. Senator Dexter should bring hither his committee of fat Senators to discuss the question of a 'living wage.' 'Tis odd that in this time of bursting plenty some three thousand men should be fighting about 'a living wage'!"

As they crossed the armed camp, they heard in the distance the sound of pistol shots and sharp cries. There was a quick rush of men with rifles to the scene of blood.

"A case of the right to do with mine whatever I will! One of the sacred guarantees of our Constitution," the Anarch observed impassively. "You have doubtless read President Butterfield's public speeches on 'Lawless Labor' and 'Freedom of Contract'?" It sounds well, — the scholarly

gentleman's passion for freedom. He should put on a pair of greasy overalls and try to support a wife and children with his hands, if he wants to test his 'freedom of contract.' . . . But property must be respected, — the sacred right to do with one's own what one will. Behold! the majesty of the law!"

Some deputy sheriffs were dragging a bleeding, dazed creature toward the prison car, while others armed with revolvers were keeping back a crowd of shrieking, cursing foreigners. Upon the stupid, bewildered face of the prisoner was written a large surprise.

"He has been guilty of opening his mouth in argument with some scab, — an offence against the law. . . . It is useless to enter the works. The company is merely making a pretence of operating them with this scum, so that they may better coerce their trained workers into submission."

They passed out of this little corner of hell into the miserable town where idle laborers were gathered in knots waiting the outcome of their hopeless contest.

"Now we shall see," said the guide, "the domestic working of this bit of civilization."

They passed through the saloons where the men crowded for warmth and cheer, entered the squalid homes and talked with grim-faced women, sitting in bare rooms, idle and cold. Here as elsewhere the Anarch seemed at home, and the people received him readily, as one of themselves, in the great freemasonry of those who have labored with their hands for the daily wage. When Hugh Grant, touched by the dumb misery about him, would have given money to a gaunt woman with hungry children, his guide restrained him.

"Do not tempt the single one; give to the fund, — to the cause. . . . Poor, foolish people, they have been guilty of an economic crime — a great devotion, the sacrifice of self for the good of their class!"

And as they left this scene of sordid battle, the Anarch recounted the story of the works.

"It was founded by that same philanthropist who has given us our Hall of Peace, and, thanks to tariff privilege and cunning devices that he controlled, made himself a large fortune. Not that he invented anything — created any useful thing. The process from which he made his chief gains was the work of an old Scotchman, whom he bought and discarded. Afterwards this plant was one of those taken by the Republic crowd, of whom you know. After manipulation by that master hand of finance, Oliver Whiting, its watered securities were sold to the public. It has paid something like forty per cent upon that inflated valuation. Nevertheless the company finds it cheaper to fight its men than to yield in this matter of a 'living wage.' 'Tis an old, old story — one that you may know even better than I."

And Hugh Grant, remembering the vaults beneath the Bank of the Republic, where millions of corporation securities lay hoarded, began to see and to understand the meaning of these paper chains, deftly forged by the banker Oliver Whiting and "the Republic crowd."

By night they whirled over the country where the fires of the coke-ovens shone dusky red in the dark sky.

"Only the rawest labor is used there," his guide remarked, "'hunkies.' They are fed to the flames by the dozen because it is cheaper in this rich country to burn 'hunkies' than to inspect rigorously such danger-pits as these coke-ovens. Government inspection, in a country where the right to do with his own what he will is the fundamental law of the land, must be a farce. It would hinder the development of our resources, which is the first duty of capital."

The Anarch described the "hunkie," with an endless flow of figure and detail, — the amount of labor units in him, the

amount of "life" he could expect for his labor, the forms and conditions of his task.

"We shall see more of him yonder. Our next goal is one of those modern marvels, much heralded in print, that arouse the after-dinner patriotism of an unthinking public. It is a large industrial town, built at enormous expense in a few months out of a barren waste, and filled already with thousands of workers, — the very labor-house of modern industrialism, the bivouacked army of production."

A gray and wintrish sky hung gloomily over the flat, sandy plain, ribbed by many rails, converging to this centre of labor. Neither grass nor trees would grow abundantly upon the soil, — merely scrubby bushes in the hollows of the sandy ridges. From afar black tiers of tall, straight chimneys, like giant stakes, rose into the gray cloud, lamping the gloom with their belching fires. They were wreathed in smoke shot by red flames.

"There!" said the guide, raising his hand.

A bitter wind swept the plain, cutting to the bone. Before them lay sprawled the labor-house. No invitation of kindly nature called forth this city, — no fertile valley, no broad river, no sheltering bay — nothing! The hand of man made a spot with the steel point of dividers upon the map, and lo! here in the waste space, in answer to "economic law," had sprung full-grown this Titan from the barren soil.

"For," explained the Anarch, "this is the scientific point of cheapest production and distribution. Here most easily the raw stuff of steel can be gathered and the finished product scattered up and down the land. Moreover, a great industrial army, camped here in the midst of a desert plain, can most easily be controlled. No rebel influence may gain a foothold in this private kingdom."

They penetrated the modern Utopia by the broad main avenue.

"Note," said the guide, "the well-paved roads, the cement walks, the handsome bank, the church and school and hotel. These are the marvel of the magazine writer. Also the hospital, equipped and maintained by the corporation, and this pretty little park with shrubs and growing flowers between the town and the works. It is all that the imagination of capital can conceive that labor might need or desire — even to the decent saloon."

As they approached the entrance to the vast works, they heard the low thunder of the mills and saw the wreaths of poisonous yellow gases floating upward to the leaden sky. They crossed a broad canal, filled with water, and were stopped before the mouth of a dark tunnel through which lay the only path into the works. Men in uniform came from the guard-house and demanded passports.

"Note the moat, the tunnel, the railroad embankment," murmured the Anarch. "They have prepared for trouble. A mere handful of armed guards could hold these works against ten thousand fighters!"

Within the spidery spans of the webbed structures, in the vast twilight of the mills, the dull roar rose to the insistent whine and shriek of electric crane and steam whistle, — the voice of the man-made monster. From the deep pits into which steel scoops dug, by the glowing streams of molten metal flowing from the ore-pots, before the long line of furnaces they passed. Giant arms swung to and fro above their heads, bearing hissing vessels, dropped glowing ingots into the flaming mouths of furnaces, then picked them up and slid them forward under huge rolls. And the glowing metal, tons and tons of fiery heat, shot forward into long lines of snaky red, moulded, pounded, cut, — to drop at last as beams of steel, — on which the world could build upwards to the sky.

And in and out among the melting-pots, the glowing

furnaces, the molten streams, the fiery ingots, white-faced, sweaty men ran to and fro, fashioning the steel, — fingers of the mighty hand. Men of rough faces, like rocks and gnarled knots of wood, men with quivering muscled limbs, shielding their eyes from the terrible glare of the dripping metal. "Most of these," said the guide, "are mere hunkies. They are strong as animals, but they can endure the awful heat only a few years. They drop out, scarcely more than youths, and others take their places."

When the workers stopped in the momentary intervals of their labor and looked at the strangers, in their rude faces there shone a human light of manhood, seeming to say, "I too am a man. I earn my bread with the life of my body."

And the wanderer thought of the sleek, soft-fleshed men of the great City, who manipulated the hands of the machine, afar off. . . .

As they slowly passed from mill to mill, following the path of the metal, the Anarch, bellowing hoarsely in the din, ever explained, — hours, wages, per cent of accidents, length of life, days of labor, — until at length they emerged into the cheerless day amid long lines of laden cars. About the horizon shone other fires from factory chimneys. The Anarch, pointing, said, "Industries swarm about their mother, — steel!"

Over the desolate plain were scattered also the hamlets of labor.

"Employment is uncertain," the guide continued as they went their way. "That is the worst aspect of the system. The chance to labor depends upon a thousand hidden accidents beyond the will of the men to control. To-morrow these roaring mills may be silent and the chimneys dark. For every four days of earning, the worker must expect one of idleness."

The younger man, looking over the desolate plain with its clustered houses, said: —

"And still they bring children into the world!"

"'Tis the human way. Do you blame them for that? . . . Yes, they breed. Their masters depend upon the instinct. They were called into being to feed the machine. They are bred for labor like cattle. But with cattle the supply is reckoned closely to the demand. With men the supply must be greater than the demand in order that the cost of production may be kept down. Well, they breed — the supply is inexhaustible. And there is always Europe to breed for us!"

They breed! But what, asked the wanderer insistently, does LIFE mean in this vast gray labor-house?

XXVIII

"COME WITH ME!"

AND thus this strange pilgrimage, like another descent into purgatory and even unto hell, continued, — the shabby bearded Anarch leading his companion from factory, warehouse, and mill to mine and railroad and shop, teaching him by the sight of his own eyes what life means to the silent multitude upon whose bent shoulders the fabric of society rests, — what that "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" — brave aspirations of the forefathers — has brought to the common man in this land of destiny and desire.

The wanderer breathed the deadly fumes of smelter and glass works, saw where men were burned in great converters, or torn limb from limb upon the whirling teeth of swift machines, — done to death in this way and that, or maimed and cast useless upon the rubbish heap of humanity, — waste product of the process.

"For," as his guide repeated, "in this country, where Property is sacred, nothing is cheaper than human life. The slaughter list of industry is enormous. For, remember, the supply of raw labor is inexhaustible."

He recalled the words of a sleek and comfortable man of business, at the end of the day, with his good dinner comfortably in his belly and a fat cigar between his lips: "There's too much sentimentalism in the air. Some religion less effeminate than Christ's is needed to fit the facts of life. In the struggle the weak must go under, and it is a crime to interfere

with natural law." The weak must go under! Surely if that were the law, any religion that would offer an anodyne to the hopeless were a blessing. But again and again the question rose unanswered to his lips, — who are the weak? And the sleek one with his cigar said, "Those who go under!" . . .

So they passed on their way through squalid factory town reeking with human vice and disease, through the network of railroad terminals crowded with laden cars rolling forth to satisfy desires. They loitered in busy city stores, in dim basement holes where bread and clothes were making, in filthy slaughter-houses where beasts were slain by beasts. Thus they saw the life of labor.

In a great industrial city they entered the two-room tenement of a woman laborer. The mother and her five children had been deserted by the father, and the woman was with child. Gaunt and weary, she returned from her task in a tack factory close by. As she sat before them, huddled on her chair, the life to be, now sucking at her body, showed through her cotton gown; her flesh was wan and bloodless, her hair and hands grimed with dirt.

"One girl is in the carpet mill, another in a store, a third at the paper factory, and the boy on the streets," she told them. And the rooms were shared with others, for rent was dear and growing dearer. "All we can make," she said, "is the rent and food enough — in good times." Her eyes fell unconsciously to her body, where the new life was knocking for its right. "If the girls will only stay by me and the mills keep open!"

With a gesture of submission she set about the household task. The Anarch took a garment from the nail upon the wall and held it out.

"'Tis pure shoddy," he said softly. "Wool has grown so dear that not one person in four can pay the price to put it on his back." He lifted the pot from the stove, saying,

"Even this vessel must pay a tax of one cent in three for the benefit of others." With a grimace he smelled a can of food upon the table. "Excellently colored and perfectly preserved — with poison! . . . There is not one thing that this woman touches, not a bit of cloth or leather or food or fuel or vessel that does not pay its tax to those who have the power to exact it. The method is complex, but skilfully devised, so that no one offends the law, and those who must will pay."

The woman returned and stood before them, in all her sordid ugliness. Through wasted flesh and pallid color, through stooping limbs and faded hair, through dirt and squalor, still the woman was there, — the vessel of life! And behind her there seemed to the wanderer to shine that glorified picture of Alexandra, — fine hair curling above her broad white brow, fine and rich cloth covering her moulded limbs; all that touched her, all she was, fine, delicate, chosen. Her ears had listened to the sweetest strains of music, her eyes had seen the beauty made by God and the art of man. Her mind was stored with thoughts and feelings, — the treasure of the race. Nevertheless, between the two human beings there was less of difference than between the tenement room and the spacious hall at Paradise Valley.

"It is the chance," he murmured. "Accident has denied it to this one and given it to the other! But the souls and the minds of the two are near alike."

Behind the grimy form of the child-bearing woman, he saw the radiant image of the other, and she was less.

As they went their way, his guide said, "These are the parasitic forms of industry, which spring up near the large mills and works to profit by the labor of women and children. For we still put children to work, bending their soft fiber to the mechanic task, grinding their minds to an empty purpose. The labor of women and children is the final triumph in economy of our industrial system."

And with monotonous insistence he set forth the conditions of this cheapest form of labor, — hours, wages, numbers.

"These children and child-bearing women should be wards of the law," he said. "But the law in a nation of the free is chiefly concerned with maintaining the 'freedom of contract,' in order that each, the strong and the weak, may do with his own what he will."

At last their long journey brought them to the wide uplands beneath the lofty mountains of the continental barrier, where among the bare, rocky peaks, in the untamed earth, miners dug for precious metals. Here as elsewhere the Anarch seemed familiar, passing with secret sign the guarded gates. They descended into the seamed earth where the precious ores lay buried.

"The most useless and the dearest of man's possessions!" the guide observed, handing to the wanderer a piece of dull rock. "Here on the frontier of habitable land, you might expect the war of men to cease in a common struggle to subdue nature. Rather, in these wide, open spaces, in this gambler's task of getting gold and silver and copper, the spirit of strife has come to full flower. Here the greedy owner meets the desperate laborer face to face, and the fight is with dynamite and rifle. Here murder is done in daylight, and the law of force need seek no subterfuge. Man becomes once more the elemental animal."

At sunset of a glowing day the two sat upon an upper ridge of the hills. All the imperial colors of the firmament dyed the western heavens among the broken peaks of the mountains. Below in the lonely valleys were the excoriations of the mines, the refuse, the smudged stains of the rough surface of the earth. The guide pointed into the distance where the huge smelter of Senator Dexter's mine sent a yellow cloud upward.

"Near that is the charred débris where the miners blew up

the old works. Below the brow of yonder hills lies that stockade where miners, with their women and children, were penned for weeks like wild animals, guarded by the troops of the nation. Beyond is the edge of the great desert, into whose waterless waste others were driven to their death. Of these I was one that escaped. Men were shot and women raped. But I tell over old tales known to all. In this place it has been truly a life for a life according to the primitive text — but more honest than the cunning and hidden ways of the law. Here the eaten is face to face, at least, with the eater."

The twilight came down like a curtain, hiding the scars of man's dominion over the earth. The two sat in silent thought. This was the apex of their journey together, and the end. Behind this lofty table-land of the continent began the grim desert, not yet subdued by man, and beyond came other fertile valleys and other mountains, and finally another ocean. Thither had been carried the same civilization, the same spirit of conquest and greed, and that noble aspiration after "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" bore the same fruit in the blood of men. Wherever the victorious race had forced its way, it sowed the seeds of hate and industrial crime. And the flower must bloom, early or late, upon the lonely cattle ranch, in the primeval forest, the soft southern grove, or the virgin valley of the "promised land."

Thus spoke the Anarch.

In the glimmering twilight the fierce eyes of the bearded one rested upon the wanderer.

"Have you seen enough?"

"Enough! God knows."

"So at last you understand the meaning of it all!"

"Not yet!" And from the depth of his being there flashed the demand, "Why have you shown me the sore surface of life? What have you to do with it? And what have I?"

His guide replied, "So you still long for the smooth

paths of prosperity? You would like, as friend Gossom says, to shield your eyes from the disagreeable aspects of a world that is good to you? You still would have your comfort and your heart's desire? Your ambitious fancy still turns to the daughter of privilege, dainty and lovely and sweet to the eye?"

His soft tones gave way to bitter scorn.

"I have shown you the flesh of which her flesh is made! You have seen the tears that feed her laughter, the sweat that clothes her with her perfection. Go back to her, if you can! But when you hold her in your arms, you shall hear the tears and see the sweat of the many of which she is made. Take her with her loveliness and her riches—but you shall never forget whence she came!"

The wanderer, who loved the woman with all his blood, shuddered and hid his face in his hands before the curse.

"For no longer can you hide the truth from your heart as others may beneath specious words. You know that the privilege of one is the sacrifice of another,—near or remote. You who are skilled in the ways of money, who have seen the tricks and the frauds done under the law in secret, you *KNOW* that the game means a life for a life. One takes and another must yield perforce."

From these bitter words the wanderer drew away, repelled by the hate in the heart of the Anarch, murmuring:—

"It is not all the truth!"

"So you would still blind your eyes and become as they are who sit in power! You would eat. Then eat and be damned! . . . There is no middle way. You will become like them, like her — the daughter of privilege!"

And the other, with quick passion:—

"Who are *you*?"

Here in the upland of the new world, this bearded stranger had grown large with the elements. The dirty, broad-brimmed hat, the coarse boots, the flannel shirt unbuttoned, the leather

belt, the lean, muscled arms and sunburnt neck and face, stamped him as the man of the people,—the frontiersman, the miner, the adventurer.

“Tell me,” his companion insisted, “what have you to do with this unjust world? Who are *you*?”

XXIX

THE MAKING OF THE ANARCH

"I AM the Anarch!" his guide replied with a laugh. "I will tell you how I was made. . . . My name is not Wethered. That was the name of my mother's people. My father's name is too well known to be convenient in my life! My father is a rich man, already vastly rich when I was a boy, and growing daily richer. We lived in the City, — my mother and sister and brother and I, at least. For my father was rarely there — I should not call our hotel a home. He was abroad in the world prosecuting those many enterprises that have yielded him abundant wealth and more abundant power, which of all his abnormal appetites is the dominant one.

"Abandoned thus by our father, we children grew as we must in that large and costly hotel, with an invalid mother, many servants, governesses, tutors, parasites, and acquaintances. Before I was a full-grown lad I knew every luxury and every vice of that great City. I was robust and vital, with strong appetites thundering in my body, like my father. And there was nothing to stay those appetites, neither friendly counsel nor poverty. The church was never mentioned: we were practical atheists, like our kind. If my father knew my habits, he was indifferent, reckoning the waste of large vitality as necessary.

"In some way I was pushed and pulled into the university. There my powers broadened, with more money and even greater independence. I should have been expelled the first year, had it not been for my father's position. His name was becoming a national proverb, and though his fame was largely

malodorous, he had the only sort of prominence that is permanently respected in this country — Power. And I was clever enough to keep within the formal lines set by the institution. So, in spite of my drunkenness, my women, my rowdy ways in public places, my gambling and idle, swinish life, I was allowed to drag out the four years of the course, reprimanded from time to time by the suave Dean. I knew what the Dean's warnings meant. When Butterfield met me in some city hotel or rich private house, he was proud of my acquaintance. I patronized him! . . . My father gave him several millions of dollars the other day for doing his best to ruin the son's life, — no, I make a mistake, for the development of pure science. It doesn't matter. The good Nathaniel is a worthy shepherd of rich youth!

"I grew flabby and heavy with food, drink, and women. The only thing that saved me from physical and moral wreck was my love of the woods and the mountains. In wild places like this I spent my vacations, hunting, roaming, renewing among wild beasts and mountains that primitive force which was my heritage from my father.

"That father? We were strangers. He was a cold, hard person whose enormous will I respected, in a way, and feared. I knew he had contempt for me, and I was only that which he had made me. I remember while I was still under the guardianship of the excellent Nathaniel one of the first of those articles that afterwards became so common in the magazines was published, and made something of a sensation. It was the story of my father's career to date, — his rise, his methods, especially his connection with a certain great railroad. It may have been exaggerated, — I suspect it was, — and it made him alone responsible for the lawless acts of a whole class, for the predatory spirit of a people. But it was a savage picture of a great savage, and it pointed out a truth, — the country

that permitted the existence of such plunderers could be called free only in name. There was more truth than libel in the bitter story.

"I remember the shock it gave me — not that it aroused any moral disgust. For I had no moral sense. It was as if the fount of your personal being, your welfare, — your pocket-book, — was suddenly revealed publicly as a kind of Nero, whose character and acts had a very definite influence upon millions of his fellow-men. I merely wondered that any one man could do — could be — what my father had done, what he had become. A sort of pride, that! Of course none of my friends referred to the article, except in a joking way, the tone of our society, and I knew that there was not one of them who would not do the same, would not be the same, if he had the power, the opportunity. Butterfield, to be sure, took another note. He deplored the bitter spirit of misunderstanding and envy that could so travesty 'a great economic force' — that was his phrase — like my father. And he took occasion in his lectures upon economic history to enlarge on the beneficence to society of 'our great American *entrepreneurs*.' My father, I felt, would have smiled if he had heard the apology. I laughed in Butterfield's face, and despised his 'science.' . . . The next time I saw my father, I remember looking at him with a new curiosity. We were in his City office, — I had gone there as usual for some money, — and on his desk I saw a copy of the magazine which contained his biography. He noted my gaze, and before my eyes he took the magazine, which was uncut, and tossed it into the basket at his side. 'Make out a cheque for my son,' he said. 'Five thousand.' I had asked for two. On my lips were the words, — Where did you get this, whom did you throttle last? He said, in his usual curt tone, 'Is there anything else you want?' and turned to his desk. 'No,' I muttered, 'nothing!' I seized the cheque, and that night got very

rushed back to the City, without warning to any one. From the station I hurried up the City to the little street where she had gone to live with some relative — for my mother had left us and my sister had gone abroad. A carriage was standing before the door of the number where she lived. It was a spring evening, and through the open window I could see her seated at the piano. In a moment I was in that room, and she rose, with a startled cry that broke the melody she was playing, to face me. She was in evening gown, her gloves on the keys of the piano, evidently waiting for some one. The twilight sun fell on her hair. She put her hands to her face as she had that day I told her my love. It was the face of an older woman, almost haggard. In my hungry passion I did not speak, but took her in my arms. She shivered, and with bent head avoided my kiss. I had never kissed her, and all those long hours on the train I had held her thus in my arms and quenched my love. As my lips touched her forehead she broke from me and sinking back upon the piano seat covered her face with her hands, moaning, 'No, No!' . . . Fool! I did not understand, and was beseeching her to tell me, when I felt that there was another person in the room. It was my father. At the sight of him she tore her hands from mine, and burying her head upon the piano, sobbed.

"My father was always quiet. Now there was a little smile upon his lips, but he said nothing. He also was in evening clothes. Drawing on a pair of white gloves, he asked coldly:—

"'How comes it you are here, sir?'"

"'I came back to see Cora,' I answered bluntly. 'I love her. I want to marry her.'"

"'No, no!' the woman moaned. Even then I did not understand. 'Never,' she cried. 'I never told him I would.'"

"'I shall marry her,' I said stubbornly, 'if she will let me!'"

"My father smiled again, that little dry curving of the lips

which accompanies a perception on his part that produces decision.

“‘Cora,’ my father said quietly, ‘you will have to tell him why it is impossible for him to carry out his honorable intentions toward you.’

“‘Never!’ she wailed.

“‘Shall I?’ he asked calmly.

“‘No!’ She leaped to her feet.

“‘Some one will have to. His mind seems made up.’

“‘Then I will!’ she flashed, and without looking at me, but with her eyes on my father, she cried as if the words were torn from her heart, ‘I am your father’s mistress!’


“The smile appeared again on those cold lips, scarcely perceptible beneath the mustache, and I hated him. I knew that I should always hate this man, my father as he was. I made a step unconsciously toward him, and he muttered:—

“‘You fool! Go back to your job!’

“Cora saw the hate in my eyes, and stepped between us.

“‘Before you go,’ she said hotly, ‘you shall hear more of the truth. I was helpless, friendless, poor. He bought me, as he has bought whatever he would in this world. . . . But I could be bought! And now that you know it,’ she said, turning to me, ‘that is enough to kill your love—so it is best you knew. But,’—and here she turned upon my father with a sort of shuddering horror,—‘I have paid your price, and now I am free.’

“Rumors and old facts came back to me those swift moments while I stood confronting my father and the woman he owned. I had known from my boyhood that he had, like me, the woman habit, which is so often the vice of his kind,—oh, decently and discreetly, and with excuse, of course. My mother was ill. I had never concerned myself with the scandal that reached even a son’s ears. It was the way of our part of the world, one of the indulgences of power! But now I



saw him as the magazine-writer had not made me see him, saw him for what he was, — a perfectly lawless being. He was incarnate will; self-will, lawless, triumphant. I hated him.

“‘Now will you go?’ he asked impatiently, ‘or do you prefer to dine with us and go to the opera?’

“I turned to the door. Otherwise I should have killed him there before the woman I had loved. Cora stood before the door.

“‘You shall not go, without one more word!’ She looked at my father, who was standing perfectly motionless, his gloves fully on, waiting events with a passivity that was his manner.

“‘Now I am free, I can speak!’ She threw up her head in passionate defiance. I saw her as through a mist, a long way off, but she was more beautiful in the white heat of her agony than I had ever dreamed her to be.


“‘I love *you*!’ The words came panting in low tones. ‘You are the only one in my heart. I sent you away to save you from *this*. . . . It might have been — it might have been!’ She looked with loathing at my father. ‘I have been bought. But I love *you*.’ She kissed me, for the first time, the only time. I had no feeling of repulsion, — only a fearful sadness. It was the pure tragedy of human will. As she clung to me for the moment, her lips upon mine, my father seemed to shrink to something petty, mean, ignoble, a thin likeness of his powerful self — the thing he will be in his grave when he dies. All his superhuman will had led to this, — a woman’s agony. . . . I placed her on the lounge, and without looking again at my father, left that room.” . . .

“Well,” the Anarch resumed in a few moments, with a renewed indifference, “youth takes sentimentalities of that sort hard. Somehow I got on the train and came out to this region, with the dumb desire of the animal in pain to get away from the world. And for a long time I stayed here mostly

alone, thinking my thoughts, layer by layer. At first I had the wild boyish impulse for a spectacular revenge upon life, especially upon him who had injured me. I would go back to the world, and somehow contrive to ruin my father, to cut away the props of his power and drive him to his knees. But that folly was not for long.

"My money ran out, and in order to live I must go to work. I was strong and big, knew miners and their ways, and, naturally enough, my first job was with a pick in a gang of miners, dreaming that I should some day make my strike and get fortune. I learned that was not the way the Aladdin lamp is worked these days. I was at Telluride, at Death Valley, at Connors' Gulch. I got my lessons of modern industry and production in those lively places. I saw that the worker was a tool, like the shovel and the stick of dynamite. For a time I accepted the fact as did my fellows, and spent my wages as they did, in satisfying my appetites. At last I began to think. Men reach the same goal by many and devious paths. I became what I am by an accident — my unfortunate love. As I said, I began to think and question. Were these men who sweated beside me in the bowels of the earth, these brutal miners, essentially different from the society that had surrounded me, — from my father himself? Were they essentially less civilized, less intelligent? The smug lectures of the worthy Butterfield still rumbled in my head, — 'The survival of the fittest,' the 'economic struggle,' the 'competitive system,' the 'best.' I began to see the lies in these greased fallacies. The workers about me had lacked the opportunity, the stimulus, — yes, *that* especially, to make themselves as powerful as those whose control governed their daily lives.

"I saw that the many labor and the few eat, and that there was no divine law in this, merely an accident improved by those who had the power to eat. A consuming curiosity



seized me to understand what it meant, — this ingenious method by which the few are able to take toll from the lives of unwilling millions. So I began to wander. And first I sought out those coal mines — the Alexandra mines — where you and I have been, and there I labored as always with the men, seeking to know how they are held beneath the earth in a terrible bondage, so that a few may reap the profit of their blood. Thence I went to other fields. From state to state I wandered, changing my occupation as chance offered work. I have sweated with a gang of hoboes at the wheat-stack in the blazing heat of a northern summer. I have dug in the trench with Italians. I have worked in rolling mills and in smelters, — wherever men labor for the daily wage with their hands. And so I learned how the dumb, ignorant worker is fed and clothed and encouraged to breed for the gain of organized Plunderers, like my father.

“I saw what law means in the courts for the weak and for the strong. I learned the meaning of that boasted guarantee of freedom, ‘Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!’ For the little people it is — a farce!”

The Anarch’s voice died harshly in the empty night.

“Thus I found my purpose, and I pursue it!”



XXX

THE SPIRIT OF HATE

"AND that purpose?" the other demanded.

Presently the Anarch resumed in an altered voice:—

"At first in my anger with my father I sought some way to do him a personal injury, to exact from him a personal revenge. But as I grew colder and came to understand more deeply, I saw my father, not as the man who had fouled the woman I loved, but as the spirit of a race, the spirit of Greed—an Evil Will—mastering life, killing men body and soul, as he had possessed the body of the woman I loved and killed her soul. And so my revenge took a larger intent, a wider scope: I would wreck not him alone, but the society of which he is but an example. I would attack the organized army of Plunderers, who eat the bread of others."

"How?"

"They believe that the order of life by which they profit is destined in the elements of the world. Rebellion of labor they buy off or stamp out. When driven to it they compromise, but always they find the cunning hidden way to evade their promises and achieve their wills. Yet the day will surely come—is coming fast—when they can neither buy nor compel. Another time of famine after these fat years of plenty, and the murmurs will rise to curses. Another and yet another! For the Power is theirs, and slowly these silent millions are coming to feel their power. I and others like me go up and down the land sowing the seed. The multitude has a thousand eyes, and can see. It thinks slowly, with un-

tutored brains, but it thinks! . . . They, too, have appetites, like Arnold and Ravi. And they are hungry with the hunger of unappeased generations. Some day surely they will eat."

"What would you do?"

"Tear down! Destroy all that my father has been, is, will be — all!"

He spread his long hands into the night, with the clawlike fingers of old Arnold.

"Evil for evil! Does that bring peace?"

"We want no feeble peace! We want justice. And first there must be a blood sacrifice for sin, blood of the Thief and the Plunderer for the blood of the dispossessed. There is no middle way of soft compromise. That has been tried again and again, and the old order ever emerges triumphant, — the plunderer and the plundered."

"So also has your way of hate been tried many times."

"Mere spurts of red flame, flashes in the night before the time. And the strong cowered behind their laws — laws made to protect their property. They live in fear always. Some, like the banker Whiting, give abundantly to charity, to education, to art, hoping to put off the evil day, desiring vaguely to make amends — God knows why! Gifts! They give us our own. . . . They do not understand: they will not understand until they see their property crumble in smoke and flame, until they themselves see death before them —"

"Murder and pillage!"

"A life for a life. If all that shared the wrong were heaped dead before us here, there would not be enough to answer for those whom they have slain."

"And afterwards?"

The Anarch shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"My work will have been done: the structure of things as they are will be rent, irremediably. . . . The Plunderers

think that they are secure for their lives, firm in their seats. They little know how thin the crust is to-night between them and the pit of hell. A single torch at the right moment, then the whirlwind."

There was no longer personal hate in his tone of prophetic triumph. His injury had been swallowed in a larger passion; the form of his father had become a symbol of the Evil Will in man that must be slain as a blood sacrifice.

"A life for a life," slowly murmured the wanderer. "It is an empty creed of hate!"

"The strong have so willed it. Theirs is the responsibility."

"Evil cannot cast out evil — that is not the way."

"There is no other!"

After a time his companion said: —

"I go to find another!"

Thus the two parted, in the dark upon the mountain.

XXXI

FOR "WHAT IS LIFE?" THE SOUL DEMANDS

To destroy! The cry of the Anarch rang in his ears long afterwards. The spirit of hate! Because the many had been the prey of the few. Hate was born of the same hunger and the same lust as Power. An evil seed of evil. His heart denied them both.

He knocked at an humble door, and a crippled child opened to him.

"You have come back!" the child said in pleased wonder.

"Yes — for a little while."

"Father is dead," the child said gravely. "They took him to the hospital, and he died. He will not come back again."

"And your mother?"

"She's gone to work — come in!"

The child hobbled before him to the little room where he spent his days. From the window could be seen the iron roofs of the mine buildings, the yellow smoke cloud above the smelter, and the copper wires of the transmission lines. It was the child's horizon.

"See!" the child said, pointing to a row of quartz specimens on the window ledge. "Mother brought them from the mine. That one has gold in it." With his small white finger he pointed to a tiny flake of metal. "And this green one's copper. Don't they look pretty in the sun?"

A cat brushed against the boy, and the child lifted her into his lap.

"She's going to have kittens," he said. "Mother says I can keep two of them."

He sat and talked with the child.

"Do you stay here all alone?" he asked.

"Most days. Mother comes home for dinner generally — she's coming to-day. When she can't come she puts something on the fire for me and Lize — that's the cat."

And the child talked on about the smelter, the cat, his bits of quartz, while Hugh waited for the mother to return. He had known these people in the years he had spent among the mountains. The man had worked for him. . . . When the woman returned from her work, he learned of the accident in the power-house which had killed her husband after an operation in the hospital.

"It was his heart that was weak," she explained. "It had been weak ever since the great storm two winters ago when we were living up the mountain. The boy was sick, and he went for some medicine. He was like to die in the snow before he got back. He fell in the drifts over and over, but he crawled to the cabin with the medicine. That was the beginning," she said softly, as if the stern memory were sweet.

"And now?" asked Hugh, "what do you do?"

"Now," said the woman, with a weary look in her dark eyes, "we live as best we can, me and the boy. I get a bit of work here and there — some days little and some days more. But we live!"

"See!" cried the child, pointing to the bits of quartz, which he had arranged in a little heap. "See the sun on 'em now!"

"The doctor thinks he'll be going to school in the fall," said the mother, smiling at the crippled child. "If there were only a life for him!"


She turned to the insistent need — food.

"You will stay and eat with us," she said briskly, stirring

her fire. "If only Jim were here to see you back — you were good to him — gave him his chance, but it was not to be for him!"

She glanced again at the crippled child, who was playing with his bits of rock, talking to himself, peopling his little world. And somehow it seemed to the wanderer that there was life in this room of the small cottage with the crippled child and the weary mother. And the mother's glance confirmed it.

For what is life? he asked himself, following up the mountain those glistening wires that sang with their message of Power. Here in this country, winged like an arrow with ambition and love, he had striven as men strive — for life. The ready servant of capital, he had harnessed these mountain snows to breed gold for his masters: he had strung these shining wires across the land and helped forge the paper fetters that would bind in labor unborn generations. The wires ran past the poor woman's cottage with their life-giving burden of heat and light, and entered the rich man's mine. It was work well done! He paused by the great dam that held the water from the snows in reserve, then passed on upwards to the source. And he knew that never again could he be the obedient finger in the hand of power to bind the paper fetters on his fellow-men! In that pilgrimage over the face of the country he had seen the hard labors of men, the ceaseless effort of human life to live, — a life for a life. He would not eat the bread of others. Life! Food and shelter and warmth for the body, a chance to breed their kind, — the life of the multitude, life elemental. Such was the sum for the many, day by day, month by month, season after season, until the spark of vital will burned out, and upon their ashes rose the generations to come. . . . But is that life? his soul demanded.



"Give us life!" the Anarch cried in hate. "Give us our life for yours. Give us more food, more shelter, more joy from your horde." A quarrel over the fleshpot and the fire. The Anarch would wrest from the strong a richer food, a better bed, an idler day. But life lay neither in the fleshpot nor the fire. "Give us freedom!" the Anarch snarled. "Freedom to do our will!" Swift motion, delights of eye and ear, all the cunning wonders of the world wrapped in pride and possession. "Give us power, freedom, delight." Would life come thus in its fullest?

The strong did not possess life. The great plunderer with all the lawless freedom of the earth could not get life! Neither Alexander Arnold with his greedy arm, nor the banker Whiting, nor the skilful juggler with the people's law had life more than the crippled child below with his bits of colored rock. Nay, Alexandra herself, rich bloom of power and possession, might have less than the weary woman in the little house fighting for her child. It was ever escaping, this thing that man calls life. It lay not in the senses; it would not come at command. The singing wires did not create it, nor add to it. It was hid in some intimate, silent place within each. Men fought like beasts for life, but it escaped in the strife! Neither food nor drink, neither pride nor possession, gave life. Swift speed and control of others made power, but not life. It was ever escaping, — like the invisible waves of ether radiating forth from some mysterious centre, waking what they touched. . . .

He came to that distant Valley of the Seven Peaks, whose lonely rushing waters he had helped the hand of power to grasp. The conquest of this remote source of power had been his special triumph. He knelt to free a small tree that had been crushed by the heedless laborer. Even this sprout of the forest had its life to live! . . . Here in this valley he had been with the woman he loved; through storm and dark he had

borne her in his arms. Ah, then life was precious to him, filled with desire and joy! Now she was afar off, hid in a cloud, removed from him. So it was with the mysterious color of the mind, now gray and empty, like the uncertain earth before sunrise, now aflame with desire and will, like kindling dawn. That was life! It flooded full or ebbed like the tides obedient to unknown laws. The crippled child might have life abundantly, and Alexander Arnold might be dead. For there was no certain way by which to get life.

So let the Anarch's victorious army slay its enemies in blind hate. At the dawn of victory would the victors possess life? Theirs the plunder and the power. But life would vanish, — oh, unconquerable, unpossessable life! It lay between the stars and the earth in flood, but the hands that would grasp it came back empty.

At last he reached the crest among the lofty peaks, still seeking. The light went out of the sky, and the earth sank from sight below. The mountains folded him about in silence, and thus he lay as in sleep that was still waking. The blind race of his years was unfolded to him, from childhood until now. He had taken the words of his fellows, lived as they lived, eaten with them and desired the things that they had desired. He had striven for the prizes, got money as they got money, seeking life as they sought it in desire. He had loved, — desired her who was beautiful and abundant, sweet and joyous. But life had not come.

And in the night she who had been hid all these days came to him, the woman of his vision, and he held her close — the woman beneath all, the one he had seen at dawn, the one he had borne in his arms upon the mountain, the one he had loved always.

"Come!" she whispered. "I wait within!"

"I come," he said, "for thee. Alexandra!"

For life is a flame of will, a vision of the spirit! And that is all.

At dawn there was revealed the ocean of plain, — gray, uncertain, vague. The sun rose out of the gulf among the stars, calling men about the earth to live. Each must go his way in labor, waking to an earth made within, changing as he changed, — earth various and wonderful in which his little part was to be done. And the wanderer standing alone on the waking earth at dawn knew what was within him that must be done.

A man came down from the mountains, a man new made, resolute, set upon his path. The world was unfolding in all the loveliness of the golden morning light before him, — the world neither of the Anarch nor of the Plunderer.

XXXII

"I RETURN TO MY PEOPLE"

THE touch of autumn had come to Paradise Valley; the leaves had begun to fall on the hillsides, light golden leaves, falling one by one softly in a windless calm. The radiant summer sunshine still filled the meadows at the close of the day. Only the red blossoms of the meadow flowers by the river edge and the slowly falling leaves, slipping silently from the trees to the dry earth, bespoke the coming change.

The woman in the garden, the mistress of Paradise Valley, rose from her seat beneath a bronze beech-tree and slowly walked toward the fountain in the centre. The mood of change touched her: she listened to the murmur of the water flowing from the fountain downward among the reeds, and she listened to her heart which also spoke of change, — the flitting to a scene beyond. But here in the silent garden, with the golden haze of the day falling from the tall poplars downward at her feet, there was a mood of sadness in her heart, though a smile upon her lips. Life had brought so many things, so much golden pleasure to her lap, but to-day, it seemed, it had not brought the perfect thing. Perchance it lay beyond! Yet even the color of change had faded, and variety become stale. . . . A full brown leaf fell at her feet, and stooping she picked it up. The scent had its fragrant memory: she smiled at the faded leaf, then tossed it from her, and in eagerness held out her hands to the open future, that marvellous casket of never-failing promise.

Steps came slowly up the terrace, and stopped. She turned, the smile dying from her lips, her head raised in proud expectation.

"Alexandra!" The sound of her name was faint in the still air.

She waited, her eyes grave with inquiry. One foot rested upon the dead leaf, and beneath her garment her body seemed to quiver as if ready for flight. Her raised head was level with his, and her eyes meeting his demanded reason for his being there.

"It is a long time!" he murmured, his eyes wandering over the still garden, down the curving meadows to the forest,—"a long, long time! Another world!"

He passed his hand over his face as though he would brush the mist of years from his vision.

"It is a long time!" She was thinking of that night when she had expected him at her ball and her heart had been ready to betray her head. Then he had not come, nor sent word, and pride had stung her. . . . In the pause her eyes passed over him, noting his travel-worn garments, his uncut beard, the careless guise of the man who has lost sense of appearance. And her proud glance seemed to ask why he had returned at last like this, — as some servant from the fields, — to *her*.

"I come from a long journey," he said with firmer voice, his eyes challenging hers.

"Why do you come now?"

"Because of what lies unfinished."

"Lies unfinished between you and me?"

Her hostile glance denied that aught had ever been between them.

"Perhaps, between you and me!"

The tremulous note in his voice, the worn face of the man, softened her mood, and she said more gently: —

"I thought that you had left us — forever!"

Her voice was full of a lingering reproach.

"That night I left you," he said, "I left all the world I had ever known!"

"Why?"

"Because it was not my world."

"It was mine!"

"True! And for that reason I had tried to make it mine — to follow where you led, to do what you would have done, to be what you would have a man become!"

She waited, with smiling lips.

"So I thought to reach you, Alexandra, — to reach the utmost joy for me. But it was the wrong path — I could not reach you there."

"I waited for you," she murmured.

His eyes gleamed, and he drew nearer.

"But it could not be there — not there!" he exclaimed. "Not in the struggle — not in the glory — not in the splendor. That is not the woman I seek!"

"I do not understand!"

"I was poor and unknown. I came to you by chance, like the moth across the hills from another land. I loved you!"

Her eyes met his; her lips opened; she listened as to a melody from afar.

"Once I bore you in my arms! Alexandra! And you loved me — you found something in me that was mate and equal, — in me, the unknown!"

Her lowered eyes assented.

"Then why —" she murmured, in reproach.

"So I was winged like an arrow to reach you, spurred with ambition and desire. I would enter your world and demand you as an equal, there — all, the whole of you, as I had already my part — the better part."

She smiled tenderly; her breath touched his face, the conquering sweetness of herself.

"So I sped forth into the arena whither you pointed out the way, — there to earn the crown of success that you would demand, to win my love!"

His voice trembled and was low.

"I did as all must do who would grasp desire, possess. I was the willing servant of others, while you fluttered on your golden way beyond my reach. . . . Then there came to me the truth."

"What truth?"

"That you and yours, that this bright world you breathe and live in, that I myself in seeking you — all was wrought with evil. And the woman I loved was not there!"

His voice broke, and he finished with a gesture.

"I was not there?" she repeated. "I do not understand. You left me — you went away —" she glanced at his rough clothes — "you gave up your life. . . . I do not understand."

Her eyes still met his softly, calling to him, "Why reason, why words? There is that between us which is deeper than words."

"The night I left you I was taken into hell!"

Slowly he retraced for her in words the steps of his long pilgrimage with the Anarch.

"And as I went from place to place, day by day, you faded farther from my sight, you and all the world about you, until you were buried in a cloud. Then I went back there upon the mountains, and in the night I found you again — my Alexandra! And for her, the woman I love, I have come."

"What will you do now?" she asked doubtfully.

Quietly, as from a depth of unseen purpose, he answered: —

"I shall return to my people —"

"The foundling!"

The taunt escaped, half willed.

"Yes — you have said it! I was the foundling — the naked. And now I return to my people — the unknown."

"You who might have had all!" said her flaming eyes.

"I am the foundling!" He held out his hands, almost touching her, and his eyes became bright with a new light. "And you love me, as I am — the foundling. I go to my people. Come with me, now, as you are, alone with me into the world!"

"Alone with you into the world?" she questioned.

"Into the bare, hard world, without one privilege, one soft advantage — life as it is for the foundlings. Most are foundlings!"

"And what should I find there?"

"Love! Let me make the world for you with my love. Is it not enough? You are proud with the pride of your kind. But I am prouder than you. I would have the woman I love alone, as my equal, content to go forth into life alone with me as my mate, unknown, unfriended, with neither privilege nor place, with neither fortune nor position. I would that love should be enough for her as for me, and my world hers. Come!" he said, his arms closing about her. "I would bear you in my arms over the rough, steep way up to the peaks of the mountains. And I would be borne in yours — nothing else."

She swayed within the closing circle of his arms, smiling happily as she had smiled before upon the mountains, her eyes shining softly at the flood of his passion.

"You want all, my lover!"

"All! Or nothing!" he laughed. "'Tis the complete egoism of love. All, I demand — and I offer nothing but love in return, neither comfort nor power. Where I starve you will starve. Where I fight the battles of my people, you will fight and suffer. Thus we shall be equals in fate as in love — and only thus."

She looked up to his face wonderingly.

"But why leave all that is beautiful — all this?"

"Because it is death. I have seen the evil of it —"

"To me it is not evil."

"To the woman whom I love it is death! To the Alexandra who loves me it is death!"

"Therefore I must set forth from my father's house a beggar, and follow where you lead to the ends of the earth!"

She uttered a rippling, mirthful laugh, but it died before his devouring eyes.

"You do not understand! You cannot see the blood and the flesh that you eat."

She drew from his circling arms and stepped away.

"Your words are bitter!"

"Because the thing is bitter. It is a life for a life —"

"A life for a life?"

"Your life against many others, many, many — far, far down — among the silent multitude."

"But I do not know them," she said, with perplexed eyes.

"I do not care for your many, many others. My life is good to me."

Her silvery tone was edged with coldness. She looked at him mockingly, aware of her beauty, the loveliness of the scene about her, the completeness of herself, here in Paradise Valley on this autumn afternoon. And the man, haggard with burning desire that consumed all reason, would conquer by his passion.

"Come with me because of love, the love now between us and the greater love to be. Come with me to my fate, poverty and hunger it may be, and in our love you will understand all!"

"That is not the way to speak to the heart of a woman!" she said proudly. "Tell me to come with you to victory,

to achievement, to the fulness of life — and I will follow you to the ends of your earth.”

All the still beauty of the golden day lay in her inviting self. Why debate, she seemed to whisper through yielding lips! Why speak foolish things? For I will love you, and I can give you all that will make life beautiful, wonderful, joyous. So take me, adore me, be mine solely as I will be yours. And in my arms you will see with eyes renewed, you will taste with eager lips of desire, and become strong! And through her open lips the breath fluttered warm against his face.

“That would be the lie of lies,” he whispered. “You must be mine as I am —”

“Yours?”

“To deny all that you have known, all that your father has made you, all that he is and has been.”

“My father!”

A new pride rang in her voice. “You would have me deny my father?”

“Yes, — him and his friends, your friends — all that has made *this*!”

His gesture swept the pleasant scene below them.

“Because?” She waited fearlessly for the coming word.

“Because they are thieves and murderers, each in his way!”

“Thieves and murderers!”

“Not upon the highroad. . . . But they live upon defeated hopes, unfulfilled lives.”

“The foundling comes a pretty way to make love to my father’s daughter.”

“The Alexandra I love is not of the blood of thief and murderer.”

“Again thief and murderer! . . . I am my father’s daughter, and I love the world he has made into which I was born. I love the power and the luxury and the beauty, no

matter whose blood is spilled in the getting. . . . I find it all good! Only the weak abuse it!"

The daughter of Alexander Arnold answered the foundling's fire with fire — and taunt. They faced each other in silence for moments, while the leaves dropped stilly from overhead and fell at their feet.

"Then it is as it was meant to be!" the man said slowly. "And I must go my way, alone."

As equals, yet separated by a deep gulf, they stood looking fixedly, each into the soul of the other, and knew that one must yield. He made as if he would take her with his hands, sweep her to him in spite of all. But she drew her garment from the touch of his fingers, and turned away.

"I will leave you with the thief and the murderer!" she said, pointing up the garden.

There by the fountain stood Alexander Arnold, watching them.

XXXIII

THE MEETING OF EQUALS

IN the sunny open garden Alexander Arnold seemed to have shrunk into something less than his real stature. It was the same erect figure, the same deep eyes that ever questioned but never answered, the same expression of silent will. But physically here in the open of the smiling earth he who made such stir in the affairs of men was a small creature.

As Hugh walked slowly toward the little old man, the brown eyes examined him with a curious expression, as though what they had just seen was food for unexpected thought. And he spoke first, bowing slightly: —

“You came to see my daughter?”

“And you also! . . . She has answered me. . . . My business with you will not detain us long.”

Arnold listened, neither denying nor admitting any interest whatsoever in the being before him.

“As you may know,” Hugh began, “it is now some time since I left the world of your interests, abandoned my service there. But before I wholly leave that world and sink into utter obscurity beyond your sight, there are some things to be made plain between us, and I have chosen to say them to you, face to face. . . . Many years ago, you cheated an honest man, one David Grant. Oh, it was a small matter of a few acres of land, which you stole from him and others with him. That theft was the first broad stone on which you piled the foundations of your fortune. I know the story, — the story of the Alexandra mines. I have followed in your footsteps across the country.”


The old man listened and made no sign, of anger or disdain. "When I came to your door and knocked as a boy, ignorant of all, you chose to befriend me — perhaps because of the wrong done long before to old David Grant; perhaps because you divined in me even then the capacity of a useful tool."

As he spoke he remembered that first time he had met Arnold on the steps of his great house in the City. Then as an ignorant youth he had no fear of the man of power, and now as a free man he had no fear of him. All the vast inequality between them had faded in his knowledge of the truth.

"One of the things that I have come to say is that I am not the son of David Grant, the honest old man you cheated, — merely a foundling picked up from a haymow by him and fostered. It is little matter who I am. At first I did not explain because I hoped for favor from you and feared you might not grant it if you knew I was not of the old man's blood. There was, as you see, this small lie between us from the beginning. It ends here. . . . I did not come again into your path until that day when you were using your great power to throttle some rivals, and incidentally helped to bring on one of the miserable panics that serve to fatten you and your kind and mean woe to many thousands. I knew your thought. You were afraid of me because I knew, and so you kept me here until the deed was accomplished. That led to other things, little dreamed by you! When you saw that I had wit enough to divine your plan and would not betray you, you thought well of me. From that moment my own future was assured, if I could seize the opportunity offered — that 'larger horizon' you once spoke of. I seized it! I proved that I was made of the metal that could be used, and I rose fast toward command, — oh, very close to command in the great power company of yours —"

For the first time the impassive lips opened in a sneer.

"I beg to correct you again, as I did once before, I believe.



The company you refer to is not *mine*. Like the ignorant public, you do me altogether too much honor. I am not yet the Omnipotent as you would like to believe!"

The younger man swept the subterfuge aside impatiently.

"The certificates of ownership may now stand in other names, I have no doubt. But the blind public is right in ascribing to you the chief power. Yours is the will — behind — in this as in so much else that is evil. Yours is the spirit, dominating others, controlling, pointing the way! What matters it whether for your convenience you choose to hide beneath alien names?"

"I tell you!" the old man cried irritably, "I don't own a thousand shares of stock in that company."

"Then you have already accomplished the second step of the game. You have sold your creation to the ignorant public. You have put the poison into circulation so that your victims may participate in their own destruction!"

Arnold shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"If you come to discuss business —"

"Not merely business!"

The old man looked about the empty garden, as if in search of some one.

"You need have no fear, sir!"

At the word "fear," the old man wheeled with an angry flush.

"I merely wished to escape a bore," he sneered. "Perhaps the quickest way is to hear him out. Pray proceed."

The insult passed unheeded over Hugh Grant's head, and he continued slowly: —

"For a time I labored, if not for you, at least in the machine that you helped to create; if not for your personal profit, for that of your allies and associates, as well as my own! I had a reason of the deepest sort to fire my will."

His voice broke, and he said in an altered key: —

"I loved your daughter!"

The sneer faded from Arnold's lips; he looked at the younger man with renewed interest.

"The path to her, it seemed, lay upward by the steps of power, and I took it, dared to hope. Oh, it must appear to you the height of ignorant folly, that I, the foundling, old David Grant's charity, the poor bank clerk, could aspire to your daughter. But that, sir, is the blind way of youth, and not uncommon in past days. In our country the child is taught ambition with his letters, you know. And further, I felt that in her eyes it was not — impossible."

The old man smiled inscrutably.

"For there was something in her that called to me and something in me that answered, always — something that had no part in all the rich ornament of her existence."

"You mean," said the father, with a curious dulness of tone, "my daughter loved you?"

"Yes!"

The affirmation rang exultantly in the still air, and in a lower tone Hugh added, "And still loves me!"

The old man quickly raised his head, and his sharp eyes searched for the truth in the other.

"So with this burning hope I planned and strove. I was the ready finger that played in the hand of others to grasp, to possess. My eyes saw but the woman I loved, and were blind to all else before me. And then!" He paused, imperceptibly straightened himself, and his voice rang with another passion. "I began to see little by little the meaning of things, along the steps of power. There was a light, and the light has been growing brighter, clearer. I went to the Capitol, and there saw how the law is distorted to obtain your ends, how it is made to get your ends —" With a gesture he stopped, then added, as to himself, — "what it all means! I understood — at last."

"You do not make it clear to me."

"Not yet? I can! These last months while I have been lost to your world I have not been idle. I have sought out the truth of reports heard before. I know how the Universal Power Company is built upon fraud from its first inception, fraud here, there, and everywhere—fraud in land, fraud in law, fraud in stock. And I have the proof. It was my hand, remember, that helped put the thing together."

"What of it?"

"From here I go to Washington."

"Fool," the old man murmured, "or blackmailer?"

"Not that! I did not come to you for money. But I do not strike from behind, as you have done, in the dark, secretly. I tell you first what I am about to do. Because I have been your servant—in fact if not in name—and have left your service, I come to you, the master whom I am about to betray, and warn him. . . . For of all the dark future but one matter is clear—I will spend myself to set right so far as I can that small part of the coil of evil which I have blindly helped to create. If I can ruin this enterprise by use of any knowledge I happen to have, I shall do it."

"You will tell a story to the public that may make a few hours' sensation," the old man sneered. "What good will that do?"

"We shall see."

"Who bought you?"

The curt tone brought the blood to the younger man's face.

"Can you understand only one reason for all action?"

"Either you have been bought—or you are the simplest fool it has ever been my lot to meet. . . . And once I thought you were an able man!"

"If I had wished money," the other replied with plentiful irony, "I have taken the wrong road."

"True! . . . You have lost your mind."

"For only an idiot would refuse his share of the plunder? . . . I have lost more than money — more than reputation and success — I have lost all to-day. But we speak a different language, sir. . . . I have taken too much of your time."


There was silence, and then Arnold said ponderingly: —

"You will do little harm to me, as I have shown you. But you will possibly do harm to others, many others who are innocent of what you are pleased to call wrong — those who hold the securities of the power company, and those who own other property. That is what you fanatics never consider, — the harm you do ten for the sake of punishing one! It is not as simple as you think, — to make society over all at once."

"I do not expect to make society over."

"Then why have you become agitator?"

"I am not an agitator. I merely refuse to participate longer, I protest. Remember, I have been in the ranks of the public enemy — I know what others only suspect. I have shared in the plunder of thieves. I have seen how the weak are made to pay toll of their little to the strong. I know the history of the Alexandra mines as well as of the Universal Power Company. I have learned how the paper fetters are made in the inner offices of the City, then sold to the thrifty public. . . . And I know what it means in sweat and blood for the multitude to pay the toll on these paper obligations. And I know what you do not realize, — that you and your kind have sown the seed of hate broadcast throughout your country. Those whom you have skilfully fastened in bondage, denying to them the just reward of their efforts, serve you in hate with rebellious hearts. They wait that day when their power, another sort of power than yours, but equally terrible, will meet you in the warfare you have taught them. You have made a hell, a seething hell of greed and



hate, and on the thin crust of this hell you are comfortable. Some day that hell must break into flame! . . . And then?"

The old man smiled.

"Prophecy and threats, too! I have heard this tale of war for years. But the world rolls on pretty much the same as ever. Those who have the power get what they want. There are too many comfortable people in our world as it is, to make anarchy successful."

"Yes, there are many subtle corruptions —"

"Come!" the old man interrupted impatiently. "You have used hot words — a deal of fine language. Let us be plain. If you were in my place, if you had my opportunities, what would you *do*?"

A smile of evil mockery lighted the shrewd old face.

"I know! I can tell you. You would do as nearly what I do as you had the ability. I know men — I know you, better perhaps than you know yourself. You would use your opportunities. You would have to!" His voice sank as if he were speaking to himself. "We are not free, as you think us. We do not choose this step or that — of devilish purpose. We too are the servants of circumstance, as others are. We are caught in the web of things as they are. We cannot, if we would, refuse the leadership that is in us, or worse would result. . . . And it has been good, that which we have had the power to perform — good for all, great and little, that we have had our way, — I and my kind, as you say. It is a richer, better world than it was, and because of us."

He believed it. Alexander Arnold never lied, least of all to himself. Whatever lying he needed was done for him by others. And in the years to come the partial truth of his words became apparent to the younger man. All men, strong and weak, were caught in the web of things as they are.

Nevertheless, meeting the piercing glance of the old man's eyes as an equal, Hugh Grant read there the incarnate will

of this one, and he knew that it was an Evil Will, — pure self. Arnold's was the only human soul that he was to meet in the pathway of life that was pure-wrought of one metal. In all others there was a mixture of impulse, — a strain of mercy, or of pity, or of justice, — the Other Will. But the flawless metal of this man's soul was the Evil Will. It spread cold about him.

Arnold turned toward his great house, warm in the setting sun, surrounded by the peaceful gardens and the smiling meadows, set apart between the silent hillsides. He looked at the young man by his side, roughly clad, of stern face, and he said listlessly: —

"That power company which seems to trouble you so much, — I was interested in it chiefly for your own sake, to give you a chance to prove yourself. It was a thing that had to be done, and others would have taken the opportunity, if we had not done so!"

The old man smiled. He was a collector of men, and he did not make many mistakes in his connoisseurship.


"Think well, Grant! Think before you range yourself hopelessly on the other side — with the feeble and the ineffective."

Hugh Grant looked into the brown eyes and read there the bribe. And while he thought, from the depths of the earth in the Alexandra mines, from the roar of the great steel mills, came faintly the clamor of human voices in one cry, "Give us too our lives!"

"I have thought! . . . Have I not every reason that man could have to accept?"

The old man descended even to argument.

"See!" he said, pointing, with a smile of wisdom, "that superb lily yonder in the pool? You cannot prevent it from growing to its destined size and color and fragrance by any pretty theories. From the common earth that makes the



government of the nation, at once took such measures of self-protection as are dictated to his kind. And thus Hugh Grant's errand to the officers of the law, whatever hope there might have been of checking the operations of the power company, was rendered void before he had left the confines of Paradise Valley.

XXXIV

THE GULF

HE stood for a moment where Alexander Arnold had left him, in the peace of the garden that was so beautiful at this hour. The water trickling from the fountain sank with a low murmur into the earth at his feet. From the distant hillside came again that pure note of the thrush in his evening song — far off. Then he went his solitary way out of the silent place. A calm, like the windless space of the sky, had succeeded the tempest in his heart, the calm of single vision and complete purpose. His speech with the father had made clear what passion for the daughter clouded — the depth of that deep gulf which was between him and her, over which no crossing lay. In the eternal truths there was no compromise. Touched by the magic of the woman, lured by his desire of her, he might imagine that by pure act of will she could be his in spirit as in body. Alone upon the mountain, in ecstasy of belief, he might divine the larger soul that lay beneath the garment of her life. But the mere presence of the old man, rooted in his acts, denied the hope. "I am my father's daughter," she had said — in spirit as in blood.

So lingeringly he went his way from this place he should see no more, in which the presence of the one he loved was potent. A few hours of his life had been spent here, each one vivid with meaning, marking a revolution within. Now this last of all, — supreme! Henceforth the earth would be to him like this evening hour: in it he must go his solitary way to the unknown goal, calm within his heart in place of hope, tumultuous joy. . . .

Where the footpath entered the meadow, Alexandra lingered in the twilight, a white figure, her face averted, looking far away into the vast distance of things. At his approaching step, she turned, and he saw the tears in her eyes. Her head was bent in unaccustomed humility, and her lips trembled in appeal. It would seem that since they had met and parted, she had gone far into herself and found there something strange and sad and urgent. That proud woman he had battled with, who could love and yet disdain, was dead within her.

He waited for her to speak, and already she seemed far removed from him, in a world that he had left forever.

"We cannot part so," she murmured, "with those bitter words!"

At her voice his heart leaped in joy and pain. Whatever gulf with its impassable depth lay between them, she knew that something of the best of her would be ever his. The very spirit in him that she rejected had brought her thus to meet him once more — the spirit which made him unlike all other men she had known in her life, which made him mad in the eyes of judgment, a fool before the old man, — that spirit compelled her hither.

"I cannot understand," she said softly, "what moves you to — to abandon everything. But I know that it is noble! It may be wrong — it seems all wrong to me. But it must be noble —" and with a lingering sigh she added, "I wish that I could only understand!"

"It was to be so!"

The chasm lay between them even in this softened mood of parting. Even in their yearning, they looked across it, and each saw that it must abide. Yet the woman pled: —

"Is there not some other way — some understanding?"

"There can be no other way for me."

"But my father — he is so wise — could he not persuade you?"

He smiled at her woman's hope.

"He said what he must say, that I am a fool!"

"You have quarrelled with him — you are mad! He will utterly break you."

"He cannot, because there is nothing to break. You cannot strip a naked man."

"And you might have been the strong right arm for him in his old age!"

Her woman's hope escaped her frankly, and he replied gently: —

"He is a strong man; he needs no helping hand!"

"He is great — no one knows how great!" she said with quick pride. "But he is alone, with many enemies."

Of whom now you will be another, she seemed to say in the pause.

"Alexander Arnold is powerful; you need not fear for him!"

The irony in his voice stung her, and then she bowed her tear-stained face. This man's will was the one insuperable barrier that had ever lain across her desire. Suddenly she raised her beautiful head, with outstretched hands, commanding even in her humility.

"I love you," she said softly. "These are but words that part us, — thoughts, shadows. We can brush them aside! We can forget that they are. We need not question, we need not think. We can love — love," she whispered, pleading softly. "I will learn your will, I will be all that you wish. . . . Do you remember the mountains among the snows? I would go there again with you. You and I alone. I would have you carry me in your strong arms once more — where you will. Let us forget all else that lies between us, the argument and the will, let us forget!" Her pleading voice came to him across the great void of separation, and like a little running flame surrounded him, waking the wild fire of blood, the surge of baffled desire. The beat of her

heart touched him, the breath of her passionate lips. "Then," she whispered on, "we shall know — shall know all truly — in love, in love!"

Her voice died upon the stillness of the night, as she gazed into his burning eyes. At last he spoke, and the words came from a great distance, faintly: —

"Not thus — not thus! . . . You are still your father's daughter."

She sank beside his feet and buried her face in her hands.

"So low!" she moaned. "So low you have brought me — to spurn me!"

"I love you as man can love woman!" His hands touched her bowed head softly. "Alexandra! It is you who have brought me along my road, these years — until now. You who pointed the shining way. Like a star of the sky you were the blazing crown of life. . . . Until I am close beneath and know what you are." His words trembled at her ear. "I love you in flesh and in spirit, from the beginning until the end. You are all that men dream of in life — you are all that I abandon!"

"No, no, no! Never!" She clung to him, breathing denial. "You have said it! I am the star of the road, your road, and in love I shall remain thus to the end. Thus — within your arms — always, always — thus!"

"Love!" His hands pressed tight the golden hair, and his voice sank, "Yes — love! Always in eternal separation. Love now, and always thus! Love!" His eyes drew near her shining eyes, his lips to her soft lips. . . . And slowly his face again withdrew, and he cried fiercely, "But more between you and me, never, — more — never!"

"Love!" she persisted, seeking.

"Love would conquer . . . so that I should become what you will, Alexandra. The soft thing within my arms would be the sole light to my steps. I should become even as you —

the child of power. . . . I must yield and live in easy places, rule and possess. With you, my Alexandra, there is no other way."

"But love," she urged.

"The love that you give would turn to acid when I was no more the lonely spirit upon the mountain. When I come to your earth and live by your side, I must lose the mastery, the magic that draws your love to me. . . . So I must go my lonely way back to my people from whom as a foundling I strayed — here to you. I must take the road alone, without the sound of your voice in my ears, the light of your eyes upon my face, without your beauty, warmth, power about me, my loved one. . . . And you must go on upon your glittering path, bearing loveliness, beauty, desire to the lives of men. For you will be always adored, and you will be resplendent among the privileged to enjoy, and joy will be yours. . . . Alexandra, my love!"

Her head drooped upon his breast, and she lay within his circled arms. At last, low and startled, came her voice:—

"So you will put me from you? You will put me from you — by the breadth of the whole earth! Forever?"

Slowly he spoke, as if seeing far in the distance a light:—

"Until you, too, have come to the depths! Until you have abandoned all, and all has abandoned you! And you look within for truth."

"Until," she repeated wonderingly, "I have abandoned all, and all has abandoned me?"

"Until the sorrow of sorrows has come to you, and the world can no longer give comfort."

Slowly she unclasped the arms that girdled her about, and, pondering with white face, gazed upon him.

"It is a curse," she said, "not love!"

He knelt and taking the hem of her garment held it in his hands.

"See!" He crushed the soft fabric in his hand. "Silk with thread of gold. It is the tears! See!" He touched her girdle with his hands. "Gold and precious stones. They are the groans! See!" He put his fingers upon the golden hair. "A wreath of pure gold! Tears and groans and bloody sweat! You are a tissue of the lives of others, from feet to the crown upon your hair. . . . See!" His hot hands crushed the orchids at her breast. "Even the flower at your breast is stained with blood. . . . I see the tears of others on your robe. I hear their sighs in your voice. I see defeated desires in the light of your eyes. You are the Sacrifice of the many — I cannot touch!"

She covered her face with her hands, murmuring: —

"So my garment is made of blood and tears. The gold in my hair and about my waist is the anguish of brothers and sisters. Even the flowers at my breast are red with blood!" She took the blossoms and scattered them upon the ground. "My lips give the touch of death! the touch of death!" she cried, raising her arms and drawing away. "I am clothed in the spoils of the plunderer. With me there can be no union in love!"

Farther and farther she retreated up the forest path, her hands raised, a slim white shadow in the darkening night. "My lips are the touch of death! the touch of death!"

"Alexandra!" The call rang through the silent woods like a cry of agony. There was no answer.

He knelt upon the ground where the orchids had fallen, and clutched the earth with his hands.

XXXV

EVASION

IN the fair, still night the little moon began to shed light, illumining with a misty radiance the great house upon the hill. Within all was still and warm. The coals upon the hearth were turning to white ashes. Not a voice, nor the sound of a step in all the large rooms. An odor of warmth and flowers, the fragrance of summer days, was in the settled calm. The face of the old Madonna looked glowingly from the precious canvas, and many well-remembered things lay in their accustomed places and seemed to speak a cheerful message to the mistress of Paradise Valley.

But Alexandra stood in the silent hall and shivered, her long, fine body a-tremble. The face of familiar objects had lost in a few minutes their known appearance. Suddenly she touched a bell and gave a swift command. When the wheels of the powerful car she had summoned stopped before the door, she was ready, covered with a long fur coat that hid the white beauty of her dress, and stepped within.

"To the City!" she cried to the waiting servant.

The car, winged and of steel, like a bellicious monster, leaped into the night, and winding about the hillside, shot downward across the meadows into the dark woods. It passed a man, who drew back from its gleaming path into the thicket beside the road. But the woman, sitting erect like a dark image, saw him not.

Once in the dark woods the car called hoarsely, and the keeper of the lodge ran from his sleep to open the gates, blinking with wonder at the fiery eyes, cursing the whim of the

masters who would set forth at such an hour when reasonable folk were asleep. But the machine, swinging skilfully between the stone towers of the gate-house, plunged into the highroad and turned its nose south toward the City many miles away.

With a rush, as if caught by some mighty arm and borne through the air, the car swept up the long, ascending hill, poised for the moment upon the summit, then settled birdlike into the broad valley beyond, running smoothly almost without voice beneath the steady hand of the little man crouched behind the wheel. Alexandra, her hot face softly brushed by the rushing air, sat immovable, her eyes shut, her throat with its gold band bare, her breast where the fragrant orchids had rested open to the wind. The swift, slightly swaying motion of the great machine soothed her. Something of the intolerable shame in her heart — defeat and abasement of herself before a man — had faded away. Motion was an anodyne. And flight, the escape from physical contact with the scene of her humiliation, from the sting of immediate memory, restored her mental equilibrium. Escape, flight, evasion by the leap outwards to the unknown away from the hated thing of the present — that was the supreme privilege of power. The little and the weak were forced to drag their weary footsteps through the unhappy memories of failure. Not so for her!

The little moon was low upon the horizon, and the road ahead lay like a broad white band between two masses of black shadows made by the heavy foliage of the trees. It streamed out behind like the white wake between two waves that met and embraced in the distance, shutting in the flight of the car. The segment of white light from the lamps cut into the darkness of the night, eating it, devouring it, casting it behind!

They shot through little hamlets, with here and there a faint light at the cottage windows. The lady of the machine opened her eyes and beheld a face peering out of a vanishing door-

way. He was of those tied and bound to the accustomed path, to whom in mood of exasperation there could be no Escape, condemned to plod the narrow circle of mistake and error and pain, or of petty deed and crude joy, bound by the circumstance in which his God had fixed him. . . . But for her, seated like a carved figure in her chariot of steel, winged with fire, of rhythmic, birdlike motion, sweeping over the earth in a cloud of trailing dust, there was given the power to snap the cords of circumstance — to evade! As the numbered miles streamed past in the silent night, the sweet sense of mastery and power returned into her heart. For a brief time she had lived a mad dream, to awake harshly, with bitter shame. At the thought of her tears and her proffered self, the muscles of her body stiffened and the nails bit hard into her flesh. Never, never again would it be! Never again would a mad desire unthrone her, softening her pride, making of her womanhood a weak and crawling thing, — pitiful, to be despised of man. All the tutored contempt of her race for the feeble and the weak hardened in her proud heart. She became rigid in hate and purpose — nevertheless with an ache. . . .

The car was swimming now, high on the uplands where the night breeze blew. For many miles around lay the fat plains stretching away in rich field and farm land, clustered houses and settlements. In the steady motion of the engine, the car was floating, swimming just above the land. Alexandra thought of the flying machine and the bold young officer who had wished to take her with him in flight. Some day she would rise altogether from the earth, and in a powerful winged monster take flight upward into the heavens, above the houses and the fields of petty men. That would be a royal triumph, to swim upward out of the common air into the untracked ether! And for the moment, racing over the road in her speedy chariot, she felt herself about to rise, to spring, to fly altogether from the earth. . . . The car breathed


heavily, suddenly came to a stop, panting. The skilled ear of the driver crouched motionless behind his wheel had noted something wrong in the rhythm of the racing machine. As he swung from his seat, the whirring wheels still, he looked into the eyes of the silent figure in the car, and would have spoken in the human desire of speech. But the white, cold face, the staring, unseeing eyes, silenced him, and he went to his task, — he was a piece of his machine. . . .

The great car lay inert upon the earth, its lamps throwing long beams into the dark. Now that the wind no longer rushed past, the silence of the summer night revealed the faint rustling of the animate earth, — insect and bird alive, the undertwitter of nature in the long grass, the dead leaves, the water flowing beside the road, — voices of the night. They called the soaring thought of the woman down to the comfortable, living earth, all peopled with its tiny creatures. A bird chirped faintly in the thicket, and from the swaying branches of the trees came an autumn fragrance, pungent with memories. Behind a hedge there rose in the dark the dim outline of a low cottage, all still and hushed in sleep. Through the thronging fancies in the woman's heart came the form of a man, a face drawn with pain, stern, pitiless, to self, to her; and another vision of that same face with the glow upon it of mountain snows, eager with life and love, adoring her. And again the drowsy sense of dripping water in a great forest, with the warmth of human arms about her, a man's arms, His! And the deep, deep warmth within of human love. A tear fell from the open, fixed eyes upon the cold hand, and in the vague night, soft with voices and fragrance, a sigh fell from her lips, tender and curved. Visions came, fleeting pictures, dissolving, melting, flaming — always with Him, her Man, her Hero, adored, by her side, above her, beneath her, surrounding her, absorbing her. This empty night melodious with voices, this hushed roadside cottage, the beckoning City —

all with *him*, peopled with the one man who had touched her inmost spirit. She brushed the tears away. . . .

With a snort the great machine began to throb again, to race impatiently, rocking the car. At the touch of the driver it leaped out once more into the dark with a bound, like a freed animal,—on, on in that wonderful flight of Escape from self, into the soft darkness, now plunging down to the low plain, flashing its great eyes along the silent streets of sleeping villages, leaping across rivers on high bridges, passing from thing to thing with the swiftness of thought. The image there with his hand on the wheel seemed to feel the hot desire of his mistress behind him, and the powerful monster beneath his touch gathered speed, more speed, rounding in great arcs the curving road, rocking lightly, breathing like a human creature at the topmost strain,—fifty, sixty, seventy miles! The swaying needle crept over the dial. A leap—the sense of resting upon air—it was a roadside bridge. The winking house light beside the way died like the firefly into the dark wake. Down, down, with a long, sinking sweep, then the hard level road once more, straight as the shaft of light at their prow, and the great beast was still gathering power beneath them. Seventy, eighty, eighty-five,—they were flying, gently rocking with the hum of the engine, straining to take in the sluggish air through which they shot.

A reckless thrill gained the woman, sitting like marble on her padded seat. A wild will throbbed in her. The speed was death,—a sudden leap, a blow, then darkness—what of it! Savage joy once more rose in her heart, a living sense of power flooding her like the force of the great machine beneath her feet. Power over fate, to hurl herself resistlessly to the reach of her will, crushing the soft weakness of her woman's body. Power to mould the world, to live life to the full of pulse and nerve; ay, power over him who had denied her—power to scorn! Power to seize in her strong hands from the earth, fleeing



behind her, all of splendor and joy and sweetness that it had! Power of Possession and Dominion. Power to give and to refuse. Power to have and to enjoy. Power over men and women. Power of self.

"My garment is sewn with tears," she murmured. "The gold crown upon my head is made with men's groans. My lips give the touch of death. But I live! I — and all that woman can have, shall be mine!"

This was the song of the machine, winged and of steel, flying through the night, and it dulled the ache in the heart of its mistress. . . .

The heavens in the far distance were suffused with light. The car was nearing the City. It lay beyond the next hill in the valley of the river. Lines of twinkling lights, running into the countryside, began to appear, and at last, as the swift machine topped the hill like a bird, there lay the City, a soft dark mass of building mistily illumined with myriad points of light. The City, softly humming even in its sleep! There was the arena of her soul, where she would thread the brilliant maze of her destiny, where shame and weakness and defeat would be forgotten. The great, glittering City was her home. And out of its misty darkness, in the vague dubiety of the coming dawn, there rose a ghost, — a spirit with a face of pain and sorrow and unappeased desire. "I am the spirit of the sleeping millions," it said to the woman's heart. "I am him whom you love, — one of all the millions of men in the City. Between us there lies an unbridged gulf, — even the pit within your soul." . . .

The car rolled through the empty avenues, gray and misty with the dawn. Alexandra drew the fur robe close around her, chilled in body and spirit. At last, before the steps of her father's house, the machine stopped with a final sigh. She rose stiffly from her seat and entered the darkened house. She stood in its chill silence, looking vaguely for an

answer to her yearning among its familiar objects, and from beneath her cloak fell dead leaves, which had clung to her garments. With her feet upon them she sat down at the table and slowly wrote a message, tracing the words across the page with painful care.

As she rose the first rays of the wan City dawn reached through the window and touched her pale face.

XXXVI

TO ALL MEN THERE COMES THE DAY

OLIVER WHITING sat in his room behind the pediment of that marble temple which he had caused to be built as a monument for himself. He held in his trembling hand the white sheet on which was written Alexandra's message. . . .


Life had been good to Oliver Whiting, — even now the best. Life had been good to him in many ways, not least in the strain of Teutonic ancestry which was discernible in the steel-blue eyes, the flaxen hair neatly covering his large head, his rugged features, — also in the sturdy instinct of thrift and prudence, tempering keen desire and shrewd judgment. Thrift had nourished his race, — the instinct to get and not to give — all. Thrift had builded his fortune solidly, like the enduring blocks of marble and the tough sinews of steel in this temple of property. To run the risk, but to be assured against loss, that had been his policy, and also to be of the company of the strong, where plunder was to be had in plenty for the prudent and the wise. Yes! Oliver was rooted deep into society with an instinctive respect for all those who used its opportunities effectively.

Behold the reward of precept and expert practice in this noble edifice of the Bank of the Republic, in whose steel-lined vaults hidden many feet beneath the pavement of the street lay millions upon millions of hoarded treasure, — little slips of paper, crisp green documents of Property, — neat symbols of achievement! "The savings of an energetic people become fruitful capital," President Nathaniel Butterfield might say

describing this wealth glowingly. Among them were the securities of the Universal Power Company, and others of the same kind, of which Oliver himself held a goodly share. Behold, also, the tribute of a wise government to the ability and character of the shrewd banker, — the offer of a Secretaryship in the Cabinet of Prosperity, an office of the highest honor! It was a call that he felt bound to accept. For as he had said, in response to the overtures, "He could afford the sacrifice of serving his government, and public service was a private duty," — a printable maxim in which he sincerely believed.

Thus life was increasingly good to the banker. And these rewards of reputation and fortune were coming while the sap still ran in the veins and triumph brought a pleasant taste to the mouth. Although the solid flesh of his face was lined with little marks, — the stout body must needs show its trace of use, — yet the appetite for life was still keen. He was yet well within the age when a beautiful woman may stir the pulse. The sheet that bore Alexandra's message trembled slightly in his firm fist. The daughter of Alexander Arnold, rich and young and radiant, the woman of all others born and trained to rule, fit mate for distinction and success, desired by many eminent rivals, — ah, fortune had been indeed bountiful to him at the harvest of effort!

He was conscious of having deserved well of fortune. He had served her steadfastly from his penurious youth, through lean and fat years alike. He had escaped shipwreck upon temptations before which weaker men would have gone down. There was nothing criminal, at least, in the marvellous history of the Bank of the Republic, and little that was imprudent. Whoever had lost in the spinning whirlpool of finance during these last years, the Bank of the Republic had gained, and the strong men associated with it were beyond the reach of scandal. There had been moments in its history, — there



were records in its dark vaults, — that it might be well not to have published, in an envious and inquiring age. But before such private knowledge, Oliver Whiting discreetly lowered his keen blue eyes. It made a fair façade, at least, his temple of Property.

Property, with its privilege and its responsibility! Oliver Whiting was the incarnation of Property, this fine autumn morning, sitting in the reserved luxury of his private office, to which the roar of the busy city penetrated indistinctly. He was so solid, so wholesome, so appropriately and unobtrusively dressed, as he sat there with bowed head over his neat desk, fingering deeds of trust, agreements of underwriting, prospectuses of bond issues — tangible symbols of property! Something of the poetry of these dumb documents penetrated him. Deeds, they were, — deeds of Ambition, Imagination, Daring, as well as of Thrift, Opportunity, and Integrity.

The song of the great City rose higher as the sun climbed upward among its lofty buildings. The song of industry, sweet in the ears of Oliver Whiting, — a song that reached across the land from ocean to ocean, — rising from fair fruit fields, golden wheat fields, rich mines beneath the earth, long steel bands of railroads, silent forests, resounding mills, and smoky cities, all contributing to the golden flood whose ebb and flow beat in his temple of Property. A wonderful machine is modern industry, for which Oliver Whiting had boundless reverence. Desire and the fulfilment of desire, — the machine on which all men are bound, as in an endless wheel. . . .

Oliver Whiting was liberal and generous. If he took large toll of prosperity, he poured forth a generous share to the weak and destitute. He was a habitual director of institutional benevolence, an aider and abettor of what Butterfield called "all the forces for good." Though he had a weakness for public appearance, it was not pride alone that prompted him. Behind the iron law of thrift, beneath his worship of

property, there was a grain of Mercy, and more than a grain of Good Will for his fellow-men.

In a word Oliver Whiting was an ornament to the city and an example to his kind. This day, as he glanced at his calendar, he recalled a meeting of the board for Maimed Orphans and an appointment with the building committee at Arnold's magnificent Museum of Fine Art. . . . He folded Alexandra's note and carefully placed it in his inner pocket, calculating that between these two appointments he could slip in this third. With a sigh and a smile he summoned his secretary, who found him in idle contemplation. . . . Oliver had been married before, years ago in his youth, and there had risen in his memory the picture of this young wife, a dark, passionate creature who had neglected the forms of life and spent money like an extravagant child. He had been harsh, and she had died — he was pensively sad for her. But if she had not gone her way, there would have been no princely alliance like this he dreamed — no Alexandra to shine by his side and ornament his life!

He turned to the waiting young man, and took up the threads of his busy day, troubled now and then by the image of that dark young thing of his youth, and also the picture of the beautiful woman awaiting him in the great house upon the avenue. What had turned her heart toward him, at last? . . . Among the many callers was Talbot, to whom he reported the message that had come over the wire from Paradise Valley.

"Hugh Grant!" the banker exclaimed. "What ails him?"

"His conscience," the lawyer sardonically suggested. "I thought he would fly the track some day."

The two men shrugged shoulders, and Whiting significantly touched his broad forehead.

"Look out for him!" the shrewd lawyer counselled. "He




is an hysteric — that kind can be an awful pest. He will chase on to Washington with his story."

The banker, with another shrug, reassured the lawyer.

"He can do us no harm — only himself."

But later, in the day, as he was driven from his appointment with the building committee of the beautiful Museum that Alexander Arnold had been induced to offer the public, Oliver Whiting's thoughts returned to the young man, Hugh Grant, the one who was now "down and out." Of all the rivals that thronged about the mistress of Paradise Valley, this insignificant Grant was the one he had most suspected might win the prize. Nathaniel Butterfield's pretensions were ridiculous: one patronized learning and the fine arts, but did not marry them. Ravi and the young diplomat Dexter, — they were possible, and also that much-heralded foreigner of high blood that had been in Alexandra's train at Washington, and another here in the City, — there were many named, and all far more suitable than young Grant. But there was a strain of wandering blood in the girl, on the mother's side. He had seen her eyes rest upon the fellow, — and that escapade in the mountains! But she had regained her poise and become her father's daughter, after all. So concluded Oliver, as he was ushered into the little room where Alexandra awaited him.

It was so dark in this room, hung with dusky old tapestries, furnished with dull brocade and worm-eaten ebony woods, that the banker stumbled at the entrance and did not advance. There was a single shaded lamp, by the light of which Alexandra was reading. She laid down her book, and extended a welcoming hand, which was white and large and firm. As the banker bent over it, she looked thoughtfully at him out of her half-closed eyes. Her bright head rested upon the faded brocade of the chair, which harmonized with the rich colored dress that she wore. This day she had adorned herself with



special care, in rare colors, with many jewels, and as Whiting looked at her she seemed more distant, more ornamental, than at Paradise Valley. Her white face under the shaded lamp had no expression whatsoever, nor did she move from the reclining position in the great chair. She studied the man before her, irreproachable in dress and manner, studied his massive, strong face, — the face of one who achieves.

"You have been at the Museum meeting," she remarked. "Tell me about it," and while he talked she watched him closely from her half-shut eyes.

At last he said, "Your note this morning —"

"And you have been made Secretary?"

"It is definitely settled."

"And you will go to Washington soon?"

"The first of the year."

There was something of directness and cold insight in these demands that fitted business hours rather than the intimate moments of courtship. The last answer Alexandra received in silence, while the man sought to shift the centre of interest from his ambitions to his more personal emotion, and then, sitting more erect in her large chair, Alexandra said: —

"It is a great opportunity before you!"

"Yes!" he admitted. "It entails some sacrifice of personal interests."

Her level glance penetrated his euphemism. Alexandra Arnold knew men; she knew the sort of sacrifice that Oliver Whiting would be willing to make, the traffic of one ambition for another.

"It is the thing to do for the present," she reflected. "But with your abilities, you can expect —"

He glanced quickly at her. She had weighed the matter with shrewd care.

"An embassy."

"I had thought of that!" he exclaimed. "With the right support," he suggested.

And then, leaning forward, with her head resting upon her strong hands, her eyes averted, Alexandra said slowly:—

“You shall have the right support.”

Oliver Whiting's heart leaped at the words. It was a strange wooing and a strange winning, but the temperament of the mature man approved. This beautiful woman had observed her varied world keenly and intelligently, and valued the things whereof it was made. Youth and adventure she had rejected; fashion and pleasure were not enough for her even the false glory of title and foreign place she was wise enough to set aside in favor of a sounder ambition. She would not marry the rich banker, nor even the prospective Secretary she would be the wife of an ambassador from the first nation in the world! . . . They spoke of the precise post to which the banker might aspire, the method of approach, and at the end they came to a perfect understanding. Standing opposite her, his eyes upon a level with her gold hair, which was bound with a band of dull gold, he was moved beyond himself, moved to take her hands, saying:—

“It will be possible with you, Alexandra! Anything would be possible!” But when he would have come nearer to her she held him in restraint by the grasp of her hands, and smiled coldly.

“I shall expect much!”

And he was content to leave her thus unknissed,—the woman who had consented to share her ambitions with him. At the door he turned and saw her, one hand resting on the marble table beneath the lamp, her eyes cast down, in contemplation, grave, as became the wife of an ambassador.

It was all that he might expect, a happy triumph. And yet there crossed, waywardly, his satisfied mood the picture of that mutinous woman who had left him long ago.

He went his way to see about the Maimed Orphans.

XXXVII

THE FOUNDLING RETURNS

WITH that cry of "Alexandra!" ringing unanswered in the night Hugh's last struggle for possession died within him. Thereafter the empty road would lie plain and simple before his eyes. He touched the earth where the woman had stood, where the flowers she had worn at her breast still lay. He kissed their fragrant chalices, then rose.

She loved him! Alexandra, the image of his supreme desire, the marvellous one that had made all life glow, the dream of his youth, once imperious and remote, then coming closer, within grasp, — ah, she loved him! He had seen it in her pleading eyes. She was willing to humble herself, the proud one, — tender, desirous. Like the moth he had come to her across field and hill, as to his mate. But the vision of his youth had been wrong: they were divided in spirit, like two stars of different spheres, — she radiant aloft, he burning low and dim. . . .

But the end of no man's being is a woman, however adored and desired.

The swift car in its flight through the dark with Alexandra passed him on the road. Its powerful lamps lit a segment of the horizon ahead with their flash, like a fleeing comet, and the sound of the racing machine died quickly in the still night. Thus she passed from his life! The wavering segment of light trembled for a moment upon the distant hilltop, then vanished. All was motionless once more in Paradise Valley. The restless spirit of its mistress had fled to its fulfilment, while in

the silent house upon the hill an old man sat before a precious canvas, revolving in his mind the fine meshes of the web spun by his will, without thought of the fool.


And the fool stumbled forth from Paradise Valley, heedless of the old man and his judgment. The silences of the night, the brooding calm of immortal nature, soothed his spirit. In the herb beneath his feet, in the thicket beside his path, in the still forest, was engaged that protoplasmic struggle, of which man's greedy fight about his trough was the apex and result. The Evil Will whose working within the world he had witnessed was but the instinctive movement of God's earth-born creatures to get for self what would fulfil self. Therefore why protest, why renounce, why separate from that warm human fellowship about the trough, all good animals together, in the healthy strife of will, each for each to triumph?

The stars looked down from heaven, aloof, upon this struggle. . . . Nevertheless, in earth-born man there had been sown the seed of the Other Will, the will for good. And to-night to this one, stript of all, alone, solitary on his road, that larger spirit spoke within, and the man listened. It spoke with authority and power, "Thou art my servant, and whither I bid thee go, there shalt thou set thy feet, and whatever task I put before thee, that shalt thou do. And thus Peace!" . . . For the eternal strife of man was the strife of wills, — evil and good. In all men great and small, weak and strong, something of pure spirit had been sown to deny the evil will born in them. From this hour, from the moment when desire was torn out of him in that last cry, a strange power entered him, — the power to perceive in every being whom he met upon his road the presence of this spirit in strife within him, — small and buried deep beneath ugly desires, or like a vein of pure gold shining in all that was said and done. But always there behind the eyes, unescapable and compelling. In the hunger of appetite, or the madness of

passion, in mere content, there was always behind the eyes this exacting will that might slumber, but could not die, — the will to be at peace with self and life. And perceiving this he might always say to himself, "You and I are of an understanding: we are brothers in this thing called life!" . . .

As he wandered on through the still night, his unconscious steps led eastward away from Paradise Valley toward that country he had known as a boy. Long since the swift car in its winged flight had borne the escaping woman far away to other horizons, and she was fading from the current of his thought. He was returning little by little to that which he had been, to the life within. At dawn he beheld the gray sea behind the hills. The rich, umbrageous country of Paradise Valley had given place to bare, rocky pastures, the gnarled and stunted trees of sea-girt farms. He stood upon a smooth, rounded hillside above the marshes where the dark tide wove in and out. From the unbroken deep of that gray sea he had drifted up into life just here! The mother who bore him had left him adrift. Who was she? Some wanderer in life, like himself, with sad eyes intent upon the meaning of things? Had his father abandoned her in the struggle to satisfy a wayward desire? Woven of these twain, who were hid from him in the dark, he had the double seed in him of flesh and of spirit. Life had come to him double and dark, with its dual impulse, — the self and the spirit not self! . . .

The salty breath of the flooded marshes filled his nostrils. The sun came goldenly, joyously, into the little town under the bending elms. Before him lay the wistful mystery of the sea and the beautiful earth. The scent of the autumn fields was sweet, — bayberry and alder, aster and salty marsh grass. He lay in the dried grasses, watching the little ships below make for the open sea, and the stress of weary days slipped from his mind, — the argument and the strife. The



earth was good, life to be lived, a solution found somewhere upon the road. Here where he had been cast up, a bit of wreckage upon the shore, he came back to himself and was alone no more. For life, like the broad horizon of the unfolding sea, compassed him within its arms.

He passed on his way by Todd's old farm with its familiar lane and fields: the place had taken on a new youth, with paint and furbelows of veranda and porch. A motor stood before the door. Some City people had it for their pleasure, while May and Percy had put forth adventurously into the City for fortune. Thus desire changed with desire by generations. . . . At nightfall he reached the little house in the town beside the church. It was worn, dingy, the gate had gone; a vine scraped its dusty leaves across the clouded panes. To his knock a slatternly middle-aged woman opened the door and stared doubtingly at the stranger.

"Hugh!" she exclaimed at last with a trembling mouth. "Come in!"

The room inside was stuffed with an intolerable disorder, — the habitation of a feeble and indulgent person with no fixed aim to fulfil. And the sallow, fleshy woman with disappointed mouth who sank into a chair and looked gapingly at him told the story of slipping years. He had sent her money, at times generously. He saw that money had not been enough.

"I never thought to see you again, Hugh," Nellie blurted directly of her wonder. "How are you?"

"I have been busy about my affairs," he answered. Neither she nor her children had been for much in those affairs. "But now I shall be less occupied."

"Made a fortune, I suppose?" she suggested, an eager smile on her sallow face. It was the wish she had expressed when he had departed from this house years before.

"No!" he said, conscious of the disappointment his words would bring. "I am as poor as when I left here."

"So!" she commented, aghast. "I always thought you'd make money."

"I have made money, but it is mine no longer," and as she accepted this statement in troubled silence, he asked, "Where are the children?"

A look of shamefaced concern covered Nellie's countenance.

"Joe's gone. I couldn't keep him at school. He got restless — wanted to try the City."

"Why didn't you let me know?"

"Well —" she stammered.

"You didn't want to trouble me — I see! . . . But he must go to school again, a long school."

In Nellie's flabby face he read the pitiable realization that her children had "turned out badly," as the saying is, and that somehow she was dimly aware of the fault lying in herself and ashamed before it.

"Eve?" he asked.

"She's working in the mill. She ought to be home by now. . . . She wanted more money to spend than I could give her. Girls want things, you know, and Eve's heady, like her father. So she went to the mill. I don't know as it does harm, but I don't like the girls she's with, and she does just what she pleases. . . . Father never would have liked it, — her working in the mill."

Hugh remembered the prejudices of the mill town. For a girl of farmer family to go into the mills marked a social decline. The cluttered house, shabby and worn, had a familiarly depressing atmosphere, like the dingy town, the empty churchyard outside. Sitting here in its midst once more — the place he had left — he read the thoughts of the woman beside him, — surprise, disappointment, another hope dashed. Her escape lay in some sudden inflow of money, the power to

transform poor things into rich ones. If he had ridden back to her in power, descended upon her in a glitter of gold, he might have performed the magician's act that she secretly longed for. He rose and stood by the window, looking across the churchyard to the gloomy street.

"It must be fine living in the City," Nellie remarked. Hugh saw the procession along the avenues that made Nellie's paradise, — the dressed women, the shops filled with tempting things that now she could never expect to attain.

"You know," she said, "Percy and May sold the farm after their father died. They had no use for it!"

"So you came back here?"

"There was no other place." And she added in the dreary voice of one who was accustomed to worldly disappointment and disintegration, "I always thought you would succeed."

"I have what is best for me!" Hugh replied with a flash. "And now we must change all this!"

The woman looked at him vacantly. How could change for the better be wrought without money? and he had said that he had none — no more than when he left years before, a youth. Then he had given her his last dollar.

"I'd like something better for the children!" she sighed.

"They must have it — much better!" Hugh affirmed. "And your husband — have you heard from him?"

Nellie flushed and replied hesitantly.

"Yes. He's been sick. . . . I sent him some money to come home. But he didn't come. Perhaps it is just as well!"

He knew that she was lying to herself in saying this.

"That's Eve!" she exclaimed, as a girl's form came past the window.

Presently Eve entered the room, bringing with her the buoyant air of youth. She was a pretty girl, with bright, salient eyes that recalled the mother in her girlhood hope. Eve sparkled upon the stranger, hovering about him while her

mother got ready the evening meal, calling him "Uncle Hugh," with soft coquettish tones. This unfamiliar half-relative was supposed to have been vastly successful in the great outer world, and already behind her bright eyes were forming ideas, hopes, brilliant little anticipations. And satisfaction for the girl, as for the mother, Hugh saw, lay in gratification of these unattainable desires.

"Aren't you married yet?" she demanded.

"Not yet," Hugh replied.

"I'd think the girls'd be just mad after you!"

"Eve!" the mother said, weakly admonishing her audacity.

"I'd be!" the girl laughed, chatting on.

The thoughts in her mind were few and elementary, such as her life had given her, and as she talked freely of the mill and her friends Hugh read her little heart, brimming with desires, soft pleasurable wishes, visions of sensuous delights always denied to her.

The squalor of the dingy room was nothing compared with the forlorn squalor in the souls of these two women, with their feeble wills and trivial longings. As the man talked with them, listening and answering questions, he might well wonder if the gold so much desired would not unlock the doors to their "larger horizon" more speedily than any other key. Eve was the exact product of her environment, as President Butterfield would say. Given in time the golden shower, the "chance," she might move acceptably in drawing-rooms and palatial hotels.

Indeed, some such idea occupied the mother's thought, for when the girl was busy removing the dishes she remarked to Hugh with abundant pride:—

"Isn't she pretty? And so quick — if she could only have her chance!"

Always that cry — the chance! For what?



"Yes," Hugh assented, troubled. "We must give her — something."

He spent that night in the attic chamber that he had left years ago to seek fortune. That fortune was yet to be found. Here in the gloom of the little things of his beginning must be another beginning. He dreamed, but no vision came at the dawn from the bells of the cracked chimes. . . .

Below, mother and daughter debated curiously his last words, "I shall return — there must be a change in all this!" What could he mean? And pleasurably agitated they slept with this hope of new things.

But his was not the promise of things.

XXXVIII

THE BLANK WALL

ARDENT, equipped with affidavit and transcript of record, stern of purpose to right wrong, the knight sets forth on his lonely road to the assault — and shivers his spear against a blank wall! For the castle built by Arnold and Oliver Whiting rests on solid foundations, — law, and custom, and human nature.

"This administration, you must understand, is not radical: it is friendly to business."

With this significant observation the smiling subordinate in the government department closes the discussion and neatly pigeonholes the paper bombshells designed to blow up the Universal Power Company, — that ammunition patiently gathered after tireless labors in a dozen states of the nation.

"Not enough evidence of fraud to warrant bringing suit. . . . Some irregularities, doubtless, in methods of acquiring title to lands. . . . Mere suspicions of fraud in franchises, etc."

Thomas Talbot is a sound builder. He leaves no loose ends, no weak holes.

"Your evidence," so continues bland officialdom, having received from its superior the proper cue, "merely gives ground for suspicion of motive: we must await more positive proof."

This is as high in the hierarchy of government as the knight has been able to penetrate after months of delays and a winding course in and out of bureaus and departments where an impalpable cloud of obstruction has met him.

The official, who has a sense of humor and a taste for psychology, tips back in his chair and eyes the baffled knight. From his superior he has learned that this man is a "down and outer," some disgruntled employee of the great corporation, seeking revenge by "stirring up trouble." And the subordinate, who is cherishing political ambitions and knows the north wind from the south, sees in his visitor one of those "fanatic," "unpractical" persons, who help to create "hysteria," and he becomes philosophical:—

"You can agitate, of course," he sneers. "The papers and magazines will help you, no doubt. But what good will it do? The country is sick of agitation. It wants to get down to business, after the late emperor's disturbing reign."

And as the baffled one withdraws, he adds:—

"Yours is the wrong point of view, Mr. Grant. On the whole this power company is doing a great work for the development of the country, a work that only strong men with the capital such men can command could do. No individual, as far as I can see, has suffered —"

"And the public?"

The suave official makes an amused gesture.

"Oh, the public, the dear public! My dear sir, the prosperity of this country is built upon wrongs to the public."

"True!"

"And if these wrongs, as they are called, had not been permitted, what sort of a country would it be to-day?"

"A more honest one."

"Honest! A country of villages, my dear sir, instead of this big, thriving nation. What is best for the people — and the wise ones know it — is activity, business, enterprise, not this digging into the mud of the past. . . . The thing is done. Let the next generation take care of itself — no doubt it will find a way."

With this cheerful optimism officialdom brings its chair to the floor and smilingly terminates the interview.

Again, "Let us alone, that we may prosper!" But the knight demurs:—

"I will take your advice: I will agitate, as you call it. . . . The shame of shames is that here at the seat of government itself, where the people should be a nation, their servants are the servants of their enemies."

"Think it over! You may get a more balanced view of things."

And the subordinate advises his superior that the "crank" has been disposed of for the moment, and they laugh together. For the superior is none other than Oliver Whiting, former president of the great Bank of the Republic. Surely the knight is simple fool if he thinks to kill a dragon in an administration so distinctly "friendly to business" as this one!

So this modern knight goes his way, with sober reflection, realizing the magnitude of the task, his stout heart somewhat shaken by this tilt against the blank wall. He consults with his legal advisers, who propose this and that measure of flank attack upon the intrenched stronghold. But their cunning comes to naught.

"Public opinion must be aroused," they say. "Public opinion is a mighty force yet in this country."

Is it? He will try.

He turns to that skilful manipulator of public opinion, Percy Todd, once Gossom's handy man, then editor of *Ambition*. Now Todd has become managing editor of the *Daily Judgment*, a mighty metropolitan sheet. He has grown stout and solid, these years, and bears the undoubted stamp of the Symbol. Success is written plain in every character of his person, in the glance of his keen eye and the competent curve of his chin. He is to be found mingling familiarly with the

masters of the market in that same lofty club where Hugh Grant was first initiated in the steps of power. With a hand on the little white tape of the ticker, he greets Hugh Grant amiably.

"Power," he says, glancing again at the tape, "is doing fine! I hear they are making big earnings this year."

He has been betting on "Power common," and the moving tape records the fractions of his growing fortune. He is wondering whether the moment has not arrived to take the other side of the gamble. The big fellows who are running "Power" have a way of shaking out the public once in so often, and he shrewdly suspects that the occasion for this periodic turn of the dice is fast approaching. He has heard it whispered that suits are to be brought, — nothing, of course, serious, — but it is enough to frighten the timid "investor." "Power" is all right, — the last of the good big things that the masters have tossed to the "public," sure to go higher. On this rumor of twenty per cent earnings the "Republic crowd" may be minded to put the stock up another ten points at once. Shall he buy or sell? Grant may know something from the "inside," which will give him a hint as to which way the dice is loaded to lie.

The two converse at one of the little tables, the publicity man listening with all his attention, "taking in" the man opposite him, his indifferent dress, his eager eyes.

"I remember," Hugh says, "that you once wanted some articles from me on Power. I have material of public interest that I could give you," and he describes his investigations into the unwritten history of the Universal Power Company.

Now Todd listens with less sympathy, having determined that Hugh Grant is "down and out," mere "agitator."

"Not for our paper," he says, referring to the *Judgment*. "Of course we print the news, all the news. But we don't

go in for financial scandal. We are conservative. What the country needs just now is rest, — quiet, so that business can go ahead. Attacking corporations doesn't pay; the April panic proved that!"

"But the public —"

"Our public is sick of business disturbance."

The *Daily Judgment* is owned, secretly, by a little group of the "Republic crowd," who find it to their advantage to maintain a metropolitan paper that is "conservative," "friendly to business." If the knight had been familiar with the editorial page of the *Judgment*, he would never have opened his heart to Todd, who is a faithful mouthpiece of his masters.

"What do you want to mix up in this sort of thing for?" the publicity man asks, finally, with a superior air. "I can give you a card to Parsons, who is running the *People's*. He'll take your stuff, no doubt, and there are no end of cheap ten-centers that would be glad of the chance. But it's a mistake. This country is sound at heart, and conservative. We are a business people, and a big majority of the people have no use for socialistic attacks upon business. As long as business is good and wages are high, the trusts can do as they like. People talk, but that's all. . . . Agitation is a business like any other — and a dangerous business. I advise you to keep out of it."

And thus the mouthpiece, who has taken his philosophy of life from his masters as he takes his food, gives sage advice. In a word, it is the old song, "Let us alone! All will be well, if you will cease from troubling us." Todd looks at his watch and excuses himself. Later when he meets his sister he says casually: —

"I saw Hugh Grant to-day — looks seedy, rather. He was always queer. I never believed in him. He must have done something damned bad to be dropped by the Power people."

"You say he was shabby?"

"Rather — too intense. Reformer now!"

May, the mistress of a smart little establishment in the right quarter of the city, wife of a prosperous specialist in nervous diseases, smiles dreamily to herself. Fate was good to her when it denied her what she had wanted there in the orchard road! But if *she* had had him in hand, — perhaps. . . .

"We are dining at the Rickers' to-night," she remarks to her brother, in a tone that attempts to conceal social triumph.

While May is being entertained at one of the "second-table" dinners given by the stockbroker's wife, — Arnold's ex-mistress, — the knight is meditating another attack upon the intrenched castle, in that attic room opposite the blazing sign, where he has once more taken up his quarters, having found it deserted by its former tenant, who has disappeared. He has seen the editor of the *People's*, and has received encouragement from that excitable moulder of public opinion.

"Make it bite!" the editor said, banging his desk with clenched fist. "Don't smother it with figures and arguments. Get in Arnold and all the Republic crowd. Show 'em up so the plain man can understand how they work the shell-game."

It was the personal side that the public wanted. They demanded a villain, — the more unreal and villainous the better. The crime perpetrated upon unborn generations had no large appeal for the man on the street. "Show him how they take the dollar out of HIS pocket!" said the editor, coaching this amateur.

As his stiff fingers work at the unaccustomed task of phrasing in written language facts and beliefs and feelings that are burnt into his being, the personal side of the great case begins to lose color and importance to him. Instead of "getting in" Arnold and "the Republic crowd," these per-

sonages become vaguer, less important, — mere mechanical instruments in the hands of a tyrannous destiny. As slowly he traces the story of his own life, in the beams shed by Gossom's blazing Symbol, he sees not Alexander Arnold, the courtly Talbot, the energetic banker Whiting; he sees faces and forms of innumerable men and women toiling in the clutch of an intricate industrial machine, without hope, without release. The silent multitude, whose fate it is to sell their lives in the great market for bare existence, — these are the protagonists of the industrial drama, not the accidental figures whose hands guide the machine. They are but chance expressions of that Evil Will, lambently spread abroad upon Gossom's beams of light, absorbed by millions and millions of aspiring souls as gospel, — Success, the selfish will to possess! 'Tis an endless chain of Evil to which Plundered and Plunderer are alike bound. The heat of his heart goes out to the silent multitude that pays toll. . . .

"It won't do!" the luminary of the *People's* pronounces when the written story is put before him. "You've got the stuff, but it's too mild — all covered up. It looks as if you wanted to let those fellows off. I was afraid of that. You see, you haven't had the training of the journalist." And he calls in a clever young man, who has already achieved repute for his thrilling "exposures," and says: —

"Lamb will show you what we want."

The young man proceeds to "interview" Hugh Grant that evening in the attic room, seeking to extract from him special information as to who owns the stock of the power company, who "got the stuff." "We must fix it on somebody," he says positively. "Old Arnold holding the common man by the throat with his control of Power — great subject!"

He seeks to unveil some special scandal, which the magazine-reader will devour avidly. The tale of Arnold's dallying with Conny Rickers, or the exotic loves of Ravi, would be more to

the public taste. Our knight begins to realize sadly that even in the eyes of this "reform journalist," the sin against the eighth commandment is more heinous than the sin of plunder.

The sin of plunder — a mere phrase to all men of the day! It is the spirit of the age, the race, to take what the might of the good right hand provides. . . . In disgust he hands over his notes and papers, requesting the journalist to make what use he can of his material, stipulating merely that no gross personalities shall be allowed to appear.

"For it is not a personal matter. It is the crime of the Nation, in which all participate, — the worship of Success!" He points to the glowing Symbol.

"A good phrase!" the journalist cries, not understanding its meaning. "I'll work that in, anyway."

After the young man has gone, Hugh Grant sits for long hours gazing into the steady light from the Symbol. He has spent his money in fruitless effort, he has spent his days and his heart in this futile tilt against the blank wall! When the *People's* prints the attack upon Power, it will be but another sensational, vulgar shocker that the public takes, as it would take a cocktail, and forgets straightway. It would not even stir the market for "Power common and preferred." Men would frown or laugh, and go their way again about their "business" in the "pursuit of happiness."

And he begins to see that officialdom is perhaps right in its desire to let the dead past rot in its wrong. The Evil is not to be reached by Law or Prosecution. The wrong is not to be righted by court or legislation. It is too deep for that! It is within.

So the knight defeated lays aside the spear and unbuckles the sword, sitting in meditation under the beams of golden light from the electric sign. The great Symbol covers him with a mocking eye, demanding scornfully:—

"Well, my friend, what have *you* done with yourself? How effective have *you* been?"

And themanknows that, judged by every popular standard, he has proved himself incompetent, ineffective, as Alexander Arnold predicted, — a Failure! A mere Failure!

He rises with a cry of defiance, — "No!" — and he murmurs to the mocking Symbol, "Oh, you whore of Babylon! You are the core of all the evil. You suck the very soul from men!"

The beams of the great sign fall blandly upon his drawn face.

On the morrow our knight must earn his living.

XXXIX

INTO THE RANKS

"TO-DAY I must find a job!" With this tonic thought our knight awakes the next morning and lies staring at the mass of tangled wires and scantling that form the huge letters of Gossom's sign across the way. The great eye of the nation's soul is blank; instead of its yellow beams, the sun of a crisp autumn morning invades the attic chamber. The gold that the Symbol has poured into his pockets while he served it has now run out, vainly spent in his futile tilt with the blank wall. The literary labors he has been engaged in of late in the effort to set forth his burning experience tempt him strangely. He would like to earn his bread in some such way. But he has not that "training of the journalist." "Our business is to entertain the public," said the editor of the *People's*. Hugh laughs at the idea of his entertaining Gossom's public with the truth within him. . . . This bright autumn morning he thinks of the mountains where he might earn his bread in the primitive way of man with his hands, — there in the open where the social impact has not yet begun its deadly grind, where men are free, at least seemingly, beneath the sky. But this is his world, — the resounding City, with its clamorous cry. And first of all, immediate to him, there are Nellie and the children, Joe and Eve. They must have their bread — and more than bread. He has promised them, he has promised himself, and that promise he will fulfil. Thus the warring knight disappears, and plain man emerges. Metaphorically he shakes his fist at the blank Symbol, but prosaically he gets out of bed and dons his clothes.

He fared forth into the streets, once more the stranger, the loose unit, in search of his place, his attachment in life. It was gay this brilliant autumn morning, full of fleeting winds and warm light. The volume of people in the City seemed to be ever on the increase, crowding the pavements, dammed up in little groups at the crossings. Like this, alone, years before he had set forth in search of the one name known to him, and to-day, drifting with the stream upward along the avenue, he remembered the past and all that it had meant to him — that one name among the millions. What it had meant to him in experience, in human knowledge, in desire and in sorrow! He would not have it other than it was, all waste as it apparently had been if the accounts were to be cast at this moment of the full ten years. And with the promise of the beautiful day, the truth came to him, assuringly, that nothing in this life was waste, pure waste, neither knowledge, nor disappointment, nor sorrow — least of all sorrow! . . . Up the City he wandered, following unconsciously his former road, past the gay shops thronged with buyers, through the busy streets. He smiled at the picture of himself as he was then, the youth agape at the city toys, staring in at shop windows, admiring the profuse dress of the women, the display and abundance of the great City. To-day all this meant no more to him than to the ragged loafer at the curb, staring at the phantasmagoria of the sensual show of things. Like a ghost the man passed through the allurements for every appetite arranged enticingly to excite the throng.

Yet he was not alone in all that crowd of unknown faces, as he had been before. For though he passed like a ghost at the feast of desire, he had a warm sense of the men and women about him, an intimate understanding and love for them as never before. . . . Not in isolation of mountain solitude, not in loneliness, must life be lived out, a personal solution simply, but in touch with these, the many of the City street,

in that place where he had been drawn first: he must flow on like these through the city channels, in the great congregation of men, touching them, sharing with them, partaking of the common impulses with them. The solitary died. . . .

There was a church upon the street, far up the City near where Arnold lived, a church with a strange portal copied from some ancient cathedral and celebrated for its beauty; nevertheless out of place and unbeautiful in its present place, like the allegory upon its bronze doors, like the ceremonies enacted within, — forms and vestments from which the meaning had utterly departed. . . . To-day there was a rich red carpet spread through the portal to the street, and a long line of motors and carriages was slowly approaching at the noon hour. Hugh, passing at his leisurely pace, was caught in the jam of the curious about the doors of the church. A marriage or a funeral had taken place within, it was evident. For the pagan dwellers in this community still held to the superstition of having these ceremonies performed at the hands of the church. The social tradition thus outlasted the religious in the people! The strains of organ music rolled out into the street, as the guests poured from the church, and the packed gazers craned their heads to get sight of the festive ones, in a good-natured curiosity, a sympathetic good will for the wedded pair. In the street a number of police tried to straighten out the confusion and press back the curious crowd. Hugh, caught thus near the curb, became aware of familiar faces among the finely dressed people who were emerging from the church and seeking their cars and carriages. That large woman with waving plumes in her black hat, her little muff caught up to her giggling lips, a flutter of dangling ornaments on her gown, was the broker's wife, Conny Rickers, and the man with her was not the pudgy broker, but little Michael Ravi, elegant and faded, the man of fashion plus the man of action. And there was Nathaniel

Butterfield, who never missed a notable function, in his character of one who "keeps in touch." He was conversing with old Arnold, and followed him into his car. . . . Hugh started with a sudden swift pain at his heart, quickening his memory. It shot through him that this must be *her* marriage day, and this triumphant organ march was a pæan to her and Oliver Whiting! He pushed his way through the mass, and hastened his pace, head down. At the corner he was again delayed by a cross current of traffic, and, looking up into the window of a great motor that was panting slowly through the press, he saw Alexandra and her husband. She was pale and her face was thin. The bridal crown scarcely rested on her beautiful waving hair. Her eyes looked up and out through the window, while her husband was speaking. The banker was handsome, — a strong, vigorous face at its flood of triumph. . . . For a long moment thus! Then the car freed itself from the press and began to move forward. Alexandra turned her head, and the thoughtful gaze from her gray eyes fell upon the crowded street, swept downward until it met the man on the curb. They looked, and her eyes returned to her husband by her side. . . . Hugh stumbled across the street in the confusion of vehicles and frightened pedestrians, was caught roughly by an officer, shoved aside, and finally emerged in a quieter spot, blinded, his heart beating hard.

The present had been torn aside, and the old desire leaped madly forth, the self that demanded *her*, the loved woman. The City danced uncertainly before his eyes, in a swirl of buildings and persons, and he was blind. An organ-grinder who was turning his battered instrument, crouched by the door of a house, held up a grimy hand. Mechanically he reached for a coin and dropped it in the waiting hand and passed on. Then slowly the will within righted itself over his being, and he saw the throbbing City once more, and life and Alexandra and himself. . . . The job was to be found, and life lived.

The bright sunlight fell upon the marble columns of the Bank of the Republic, shining fair and soft in spite of the City smoke. The bronze gates were invitingly open, and the massive doors pushed back. Hugh hesitated, then entered. He had never been within Oliver Whiting's monument, and he was idly minded to have a look at this celebrated temple of property. Within the entrance hall two broad flights of marble steps with massive balustrades of veined marble led to the upper stories. The light flooded here, touching the colored stone, the heavy bronze. It was rich and massive and subdued. A huge bronze candelabrum stood by the doors, beside which was placed like a statue a liveried servant. Beneath the stairway was the entrance to the main banking-room, and here all was dim, the light filtering cunningly from disguised apertures in the lofty dome. The great room with its marble-lined dome and marble screen and benches—all of a pale Verona marble almost translucent—had the effect of religious solemnity and repose. Across its broad marble floor men came and went; before the little windows in the marble screen men stood in line and exchanged words with the priestly attendants within. There were many people in the room, more business than ever. Yet the size and the proportion and the domed vastness of the place submerged the busy throng, also produced a hush, as befits a temple, upon the profane men of business. It was the triumph, as a piece of modern adaptation, of that notable architect Herbert Ellgood,—the conversion of a Greek temple into a temple of commerce. Beneath the dome there was nothing but this pale gray marble. Instead of the ostentatious display of gold and paper money behind wire screens, here every sign of money was suppressed, hidden away in the inner portions of the edifice. The attendants of the temple spoke through narrow apertures in the marble screen, and the oracles of the higher gods stationed above or down below were transmitted

to the waiting supplicants in subdued whisperings through this marble screen. The architect had striven for a wonderful effect by excluding all metal and wood and highly colored stone, relying solely upon light filtered indirectly on pale, translucent marble. It was what the newspapers described as "chaste." Footsteps scarcely echoed in the great room. . . .

One of the liveried attendants was guiding a party through the place, pointing out its marvels. Hugh overheard his catalogue of dazzling figures: "The land cost three millions of dollars, and the building itself a million and a half. In this building there is kept over a hundred millions of money, and bonds and securities that would mount up to half a billion of dollars, not counting the papers in the private boxes below stairs. It took five six-horse drays to cart this wealth from the old bank the time they moved. And there were twenty mounted policemen to guard the drays, and dozens of detectives in plain clothes." . . .

A sigh of wonder and awe escaped the listening group at each stanza of the epic enumeration. . . .

"Each one of them pillars," the guide continued, "is solid Eytalian marble, each one forty-eight feet long and four feet through at the base, all solid marble —"

Sotto voce, "Solid marble, all of 'em — think of that!" "— each one was brought from Italy — they're exact copies of pillars in an ancient temple," etc. The admiring party moved away to stand in the centre of the room and gape upward at the airy dome while the guide poured forth his stream of figures. As they trooped out of the great banking chamber Hugh heard the murmur, "Over half a billion dollars of vally'bles, — oh, my!" And the wonder escaped in a whistle, half sigh. The mind was aghast at the volume of radiance, joy, desire, distilled and stored in this magnificent temple of property! At the entrance a draggled street wanderer stood

and peered through the dim light of the place into the marble vault of the great dome. Hugh watched him in amused speculation. What were the ideas passing through the brain of this waif as he beheld the majestic room? At the door Hugh recognized beneath his uniform the familiar figure of the old porter Mike, who respectfully touched his hat.

"First time you've been in? You don't say, sir! They come by thousands to see the bank. Been down to the vaults? Oh, you ought to see the vaults — they're very remarkable, every one says. There, sir, to the right!"

And fairly ushered down the hidden stairs, Hugh descended to the underworld of the bank. The party of visitors were gaping through the heavy steel bars of the outer gate of the vaults. The watchman, recognizing Hugh, swung open the gate and admitted him to the vault. Before the huge steel door, like an enormous eye, sat the special guardian of the place, — a large fat man whom Hugh remembered. He had grown heavier and rounder with the weight of his increased cares, and sat like an enormous chubby bird behind his desk at the door of the steel storehouse. He reached a hand to Hugh and asked huskily: —

"Come to see the vaults, Mr. Grant?"

Then he slipped from his perch and waddled to the great round door.

"It weighs fifteen tons," he sighed asthmatically. "It has six time clocks."

He gave the huge metal mass a light push, and it moved easily on its hinges, like a precise instrument.

"The largest and best one ever made!"

He waddled on through the round aperture into the stuffy, steel-lined vault, and explained minutely the intricate system pursued to meet cunning fraud. Some customers who were opening their boxes looked at the two and frowned suspiciously. The vault-keeper wheezed on in his recital of armor-plate

thickness, quality of metal, etc., enthusiastically demonstrating the impregnability of the strong box. They emerged from the steel vault, glittering with electric light like a jewel box, and descended a short flight of steps into a dark pit.

"The Bank," wheezed the guide, "rests on bed rock, but the vaults are elevated — they rest on these masonry piers."

Out of the dark emerged the figure of a man who turned and patrolled the narrow space.

"Watchmen here all the time!" whispered the guide, "one in daytime, and two at night! See? No danger of excavation, coming up under the vault — sure to be caught."

It was marvellous, like the great dome above, the ingenious protection that man had devised to secure his property! Hugh Grant, who had seen naked men manipulate great pots of molten metal at frightful risk of life and limb, who had seen the slender protection for lives in the deep mines beneath the earth, smiled at the enthusiasm of the round, fat guardian.

"Come here!" exclaimed the latter, in an ecstasy of delight. "This is something you won't find in any other bank in the world!"

He pointed to an arrangement of small pipes that ran along the piers beneath the vault. They looked like the pipes of a heating system, only smaller and more of them. The fat man touched them with his hand.

"The papers said it was superheated steam," he whispered, "but it ain't that. That's no good. It's—" his voice sank to the lowest note — "it's ammonia! Ammonia gas! All this vault can be flooded with the gas, quick, automatic. Nobody can live in it, you see. Case of mob — or anything of the sort. And it doesn't hurt the stuff as steam might."

All this fearful planning, this contrivance, for protection against possible mob violence!

"Where does it come from?" stammered Hugh, aghast at the imagination of the guardians of property.

The fat man closed his little eyes and became grave.

"That's a secret!" he said. "Nobody knows, but it's all there for an emergency. If any of those anarchists think they'd like a try—" He made a significant gesture, and Hugh could supply the rest, — the suffocating fumes of the deadly gas filtering through the vaults. At last within the inner recess of her temple Property was safe!

"Perfect, isn't it, sir? Everything perfect—can't be beat for protection," said the vault-keeper, slipping back into his seat and looking more than ever like an enormous bird of prey. "Mr. Venable? Foreign department, on the top floor."

With a last glance into the glittering strong box where slept in safety the securities of the celebrated power company, and many, many other paper vouchers of ownership, Hugh stepped into the private elevator and was shot noiselessly to the roof of the temple, where in an inner chamber was housed the foreign department of the great bank, over which Venable now presided.

"I wandered in," Hugh explained, "as I was passing, and the wonders of your temple have made me waste time that should have been spent on more urgent business."

"It is a marvel!" Venable agreed with a laugh. "The temple of Diana at Ephesus dropped in snugly among the cliffs." He pointed to the sheer white walls of the rear of a lofty building that shot up thirty stories into the sky, completely shielding the small marble coffer of the Bank of the Republic. "It's a grand ad. Only Oliver would have thought of it. The directors were against spending good money for show, but it has added immensely to our prestige in the public eye."

"And now Whiting has abandoned his monument?"

"Yes, for a time. He has gone to a higher sphere of useful-

ness where he can still practice the virtue of prudence tempered by judicious self-interest. He will make a great Secretary of the Treasury."

"Will he stop there?" Hugh was thinking of the wedding that had taken place that morning.

"Who knows? . . . He is marrying Arnold's daughter — an alliance, I suppose, is the proper word between two reigning families."

"You have risen!"

"Yes — in the reorganization after Oliver's departure — fourth vice-president, sir!"

Venable's lean face had a fine smile, as if he found something ironic in his elevation. "But where have you been? Some one said you were still out in the mountains."

Hugh told his story of the past eventful year, concluding with his final failure in tilting against the blank wall. Venable listened, his keen blue eyes averted, that inscrutable smile upon his face. The other side of the story he had doubtless heard before.

"So you just quit!" he commented.

"Yes — it amounts to that and little more. When I finally got far enough up in the machine to realize what it means I began to think, but I was slow to act. For my eyes were blinded by selfish passions — a personal will."

"Most of us are — either blind or tied — it amounts to the same thing," said Venable, softly. And in the pause between the men, much passed that could not be put into words. "Do you know why I never got on — until now?" he asked finally. "It is an old story, and the telling of it hurts no one now. . . . It was years ago when Oliver and I were both younger. He had just been made president, and was ambitious to make good. . . . I came between him and something he wanted to do to oblige certain powerful interests — something not prudent, and, as things go, almost

criminal. . . . I was in his way—I remained where I was, all these years,—until now!”

And after another pause he added, “Perhaps it was all for the best. I’ve not been tempted to do certain things as I might have been. I have been relieved of conscience struggles!” He grinned humorously, adding, “I suppose that at the bottom neither of us has the proper predatory instinct to play the game successfully. That’s what it amounts to! . . . You were never really keen after the plunder—or you wouldn’t have stopped to think what it meant.”

“Perhaps not! Men with good appetites usually eat when they can find food. But I had the greatest temptation man can have—to play the game, to play the game!” he repeated softly, thinking of her who was the bride of another this day.

“But you couldn’t—you quit!”

Hugh Grant made a gesture with his hands.

“The light came at last! I saw the whole, like a flash in the dark. I saw the web we are all spinning, you and I, Arnold and Whiting at the top of it tying the threads, the stouter strands that reach down, down to the woman on the street and the miner in his hole.”

“Yet even *they* must spin the web, as you and I,” the other interposed. “We are all tied, all bound in one with another, in the scheme of things as they are,—a scheme that has been growing for a thousand years out of the nature of men.”

“So I began to perceive when I tried to make out the indictment. My hatred somehow evaporated as I traced back the strands of the web, and found how they were woven out of tradition and false ideals—out of the very aspirations of the fathers of the country—so that each one feels justified to himself in what he does to perpetuate the chain of evil. It is not for me to unravel the snarl. . . . But,” he cried, “the least that each one can do is to cut the circle in himself,

— to protest, to refuse his share in the plunder of the common game!”

“So you quit,” said Venable simply. “But now what will you do?”

“The great question! . . . Whatever solution there is will be found along the common road, piece by piece, and first of all—” He broke off, and producing a small coin from his pocket laid it on the desk. “As that is my entire capital, the first step in this great solution is to find something that will feed me and those to whom I am bound.”

Venable smilingly picked up the coin.

“You want a job? You must enter the game once more.”

“Yes, but by another gate for a different end.”

“Good!”

“And instead of moralizing here with you this fine afternoon, I must be on my way in search of that job!”

Venable thought for a few moments and then suggested:—

“Why not begin here again? As you face life it is all one great army, and it matters little where you join the ranks.” And with a deepening of the ironical smile on his lips, “You don’t seem to me rabid enough to be dangerous—even to us!”

“Have you anything for me?”

“Always room,” said Venable, distorting for the occasion one of Oliver’s favorite maxims, “at the bottom.”

“Then into the ranks—here!” the other replied quietly.

XL

IN THE RANKS

IN Columbia Heights — so named by the real estate promoters because it lay in a flat hollow — that one of the interminable suburbs of the great City where the Venables lived, began Hugh Grant's new life. One day a family moved out of one of those wooden boxes that were planted in rectangular blocks, and another moved in, — part of that perpetual flux of the national life seeking to attain desirable environment.

Nellie, having at last thus partially realized the dream of many feeble years by removing to the magnetic centre of things, was promptly disillusioned. For the daily life in Columbia Heights was much the same drab sort of affair that it had been in the small mill town, without the comforting presence of those familiar objects to which she had become more attached, after the wont of human animals, than she suspected. Eve, also, the first glow of wonder and admiration at the mighty machine dulled, found little profit in the exchange of the mill for labor in a dark inner office of the City cavern whither Hugh conducted her each morning. It was the same limiting groove of work, at which her desires for pleasure fretted. So for a time the women persisted in the illusion that Hugh's affairs were suffering merely a temporary eclipse, and with the optimism of the national temperament awaited hopefully that brilliant fulfilment of ambition which we are taught must reward ability and persistence.

"Father always said Hugh was smarter than the others," Nellie would repeat, and Eve, the pretty girl dreaming of "chances," imagined a rosier future, if not through him, with

the help of some other man. Fortunately their lives had been so restricted thus far that there was little for them to picture as desirable. But the provocations of the streets supplied ambitions. Nellie, with the woman's quick instinct for social values, soon discovered a more desirable quarter of the suburban horizon to which she wished the household removed. Gradually the quiet will of the man prevailed, and they accepted the narrow round of toil and the few pleasures which Hugh seemed able or willing to provide — not without the secret hope that somehow the gray heavens would miraculously open for their benefit and let fall one of its gilded prizes.

The boy Joe, who had had some months of harsh experience in the struggle by himself, accepted the situation more gratefully. He was glad to have his shelter, and he admired the uncle, reviving dim memories of many kindnesses at his hand. Moreover, he found the City exciting. He confidently expected great things, — to become president of the railroad where he was employed, and at some not impossibly remote date to ride in his own private car, ambitions encouraged by the Gossom literature which he read. He worked hard. The crisis came when his growing knowledge of the City and his own minute place in it betrayed the futility of his dreams. Then he became indifferent. The night when he returned, drunk and surly, Hugh met his first problem in discipline.

"Oh, what's the good of talking!" the boy exclaimed the next morning, in ugly mood. "I'm nobody, anyway."

How to eradicate the idea that it was necessary to be Somebody in the Gossom sense, and to supply the idea that the lad was somebody in a very real sense?

Hugh confessed his perplexity to Venable that evening: —

"The trouble is to supply some other going impulse than ambition — the raw desire to get ahead. My little cosmos, like all the world, is so firmly rooted in its belief in the ortho-

dox values of life, and those alone, that I can find nothing vital to take their place. Some other incentive! Some other interest, than merely to beat the game and get things,—that's the problem."

He was thinking of Eve's sharp eyes wistfully examining the jewellery and the dress of the women on the train as she journeyed to and from the City. Manlike, he was gentler to her than to the boy, and wished that he might slip some glittering toy into her eager hand.

"It is the problem I have been wrestling with for upwards of twenty years," Venable replied. "And I have not yet persuaded my wife that it is best to send our oldest boy to a farm to earn his living. She sees him becoming a great financier like his father! The women are the hardest to convince that the fleshpots aren't worth raiding. They have always profited when the killing was good; so they argue that an able hunter must bring back much game."

"Send the boy to me," said the Professor, who had been listening to the discussion. "I may be able to find the right thing for him."

So Joe went to see the Professor, who loved youth, and in time through him the boy found for himself that other stimulus. He became interested in mechanics, having his share of the scientific imagination of his generation. Once caught in the meshes of this mystery, he was led on naturally, step by step, to that real labor which absorbed him irrespective of its "chances."

"It is a miracle!" Hugh said to the Professor, admiringly. "The boy has begun to live."

"I have always held," replied the Professor with a little smile, "in contradistinction to my honored chief, Butterfield, that the purpose of education is to teach men how to live, not how to get a living. . . . With boys it is easy enough, but with girls — that is another matter!"

Nevertheless, the girl's life was taking its course. Hugh and Eve, companions on the daily journey to the City, became friendly mates. Nature was pushing her rapidly to full womanhood, with its unconscious purposes. As the man noted her advancing bloom, he felt the potential tragedy where women are forced into the industrial army. Eve was meant for other ends! Nellie, to be sure, did not wish her daughter to marry. "I know what men are," she would say, implying wisdom gained from marital misery. "And unless Eve can make a good marriage with plenty of money, she had better stay as she is." But Hugh desired for the girl the appearance of the inevitable male, and he smiled when he saw Jack Venable come up the walk to the house. The dumb youth and the teasing girl—they would settle their universe.


"Why don't you get married?" Eve asked Hugh one of these days.

"Because I have my family," he said lightly.

"But one's own!" the girl insisted. "You have to have something of your own to live for."

A true word from a woman's heart! There was little indeed of "his own" in this life that he had willed and was creating about him: food and clothes and shelter, a routine task exactly performed, a few hours for rest and human friendship. Then again, the same routine repeated, day after day, season by season.

To live his own life according to that inner light, which burned now dim, now bright, was one thing; but to impose that light upon others was a more doubtful matter, — especially when in these days of costly living there was little of comfort or pleasure that could be obtained. Nellie and Eve would much prefer the luxury of his worldly success to any personal sacrifice that he might make for them. What they needed, he sometimes thought, was that richer life they craved, — friends, enjoyments, luxuries, a sense of importance in the



too many lives were housed, struck upon his senses and made the sloppy street a relief. Yet the picture of the worn woman with her brave smile was a light in the dark. Human courage and human dignity thrived in any corner. She had turned to the child—the hope for another—instinctively, as he was turning more and more in thought and purpose to his children. For with them lay the future; they were flexible, to be made in a new image.

And slowly, imperceptibly, like the changing seasons, as time sped, came that change which the man desired in the lives about him. Slowly, imperceptibly, without the whirlwind or the storm, the cycle of evil will in these beings was being broken, new impulses taking the place of old. The boy had become immersed in an absorbing interest; the girl was beginning unconsciously to weave her web; even Nellie was slowly achieving content. Thanks to the Venables, the Professor, the organist's wife, a family at the corner and another on the next block, the household was drawn into simple human ties. The drab streets of Columbia Heights became thick with interwoven strands of friendly meeting. Life, it seemed, was like some silent place in the forest, carpeted with the weaving tendrils of a common vine, and thus made warm and soft for the feet of the wayfarer.

"To grow somewhere, that is the most important fact, it matters little where," Venable observed.

Hugh, returning after a two days' absence, found an unfamiliar face in the house.

"You remember my husband, don't you, Hugh?" Nellie said quietly. "He's come home."

The man, gray-bearded, with the marks of purposeless wandering upon him, rose shamefacedly and held out an uncertain hand.

"I'm glad of that," Hugh said.

"Nellie tells me you've been good to her and the children," the man began stammeringly, with an effort of apology.

"We have all lived," Hugh replied, and there was no further mention of his truant years. They sat down to their meal; the children, who had already seen their father, came in; and the little life of the household closed around the derelict without a word. Joe and Eve, so Hugh divined, realized that something must be made of this parent, and Nellie found an unexpected dignity in herself to cope with the emergency that she had brought about. She abstained from reproach or complaint, thus testifying to an inner conviction that she had been also at fault in the wreck of their small venture. "Can you find something for him to do?" she asked Hugh, assuming that the newcomer must remain with them.

"It can be found in time," Hugh promised. "And you must keep him at it, you understand?"

She nodded, a new decision on her flabby lips.

Thus slowly the face of Hugh Grant's little world was changing, and his part in the new life he had begun was coming to an end. Already young Venable had gone away into a new land to get his home, and Eve was waiting her day, no longer restless. The boy had found his absorbing work in a large manufacturing establishment. Nellie had her husband to protect. Slowly the atmosphere within the household at Columbia Heights had changed, and slowly the color of life within the man himself was changing.

For now he was becoming ripe.

XLI

THE SOMETHING FOR SELF

IN the being of this shabby middle-aged clerk, one of that innumerable army passing daily through the narrow streets of the City to his task in the marble temple, there came few vital moments.

Day after day he followed the same road, a unit in the large stream of life, jostling with the thousands on the way, climbed the stairs to his desk, turned the pages of his task, and at night returned wearily to his corner. An inconspicuous clerk, his eyes growing dim behind his glasses, his muscles becoming rigid in the worn groove, he was becoming imperceptibly other than the man who had entered the ranks after failure. His world swung into being each morning, and was hushed again at night, but with the daily reverberation of life a different note was struck in him. The will having been fixed, decision made, all the petty detail of his life had followed irrevocably, ordering itself in an inevitable sequence, open avenues closing to leave but the one ahead,—so that life itself became wholly objective with manhood: it was a vast panorama into which his own hot experience was fast sinking from sight. This world of the toiler with its surface of marble and brick and steel, the millions at struggle in it, was flowing past like a broad, rushing river, carrying him in its tide. And as the conscious self in it — his own little fate — became unimportant to him, the panorama itself grew large and vivid. Pausing for the moment at his task and gazing into the misty cavern of the

City street, with its vaporous atmosphere of gray and gold, in which hung the tall buildings, he had a sense of being merged in a life far mightier than his own. At such times the voice of demand made upon him brought him back to earth as from a trance.

On this flood of life was borne the brilliant and the muddy. It was vocal with sharp cries and vivid deeds. There was Ravi heralded one day for gobbling another railroad: Hugh read about it in the newspaper; the clerk next him talked of it. And Oliver Whiting, after a brilliant career in the Cabinet of Prosperity, where he had done nothing with eminent satisfaction to his associates, had obtained an important diplomatic post, and now was about to return to the City to resume those social and benevolent activities in which his being moved. Arnold had given his museum to the public, and was reported to have gone abroad in search of new treasures to put within it. There were "wars and rumors of wars," abounding prosperity and terrible want — discontent and complacent optimism. Gossom's lamping signal still shone nightly over the City, spreading its message of evil. Men and women with covetous eyes dragged themselves up and down the glittering avenues, feeding their desires. And the silent multitude lived and toiled and died, performing unknown heroism and unknown baseness. The stream flowed on. . . .

"This," said Venable one night, as he and Hugh were crossing the great marble rotunda of the Bank, "is the very centre of modern life — its epitome and image!"

The light was fading from the pale marble; voices and sounds came distantly across the floor; the hush of the temple precinct was descending.

"Property! The temple of Property!" Hugh exclaimed involuntarily.

Outside in the raw night the huge buildings gleamed, tier on tier. The streets were at ebb tide, the stream running

homewards fast. The thought struck a vital spark in Hugh's mind. Property! That was the theme under which all the phenomena of this living stream ranged themselves, the key to the whole panorama. A purpose that had unconsciously formed within him now began to push to the fore. All his active life he had dealt in the forms of property, touched it, been moulded by it, created it, renounced it. All that he had seen and felt since he entered the City, a youth, was concerned with this one term, — Property. At first vaguely, uncertainly, his mind hovered about its theme, bringing material, facts, theories, reading, observation, emotion, and then the desire to express in some manner his message took hold of him. Property became his theme!

These days he was living once more in his old quarters, drawn thither by the mighty magnet of the City's voluminous life. Here during the hours of night he was free to think and work. That interest which he had first felt in telling the story of the power company seized him again, in a larger impulse to put in concrete form this great theme. Like a flame the desire for expression shot up, — the will that was somehow both self and impersonal. Defeated, crowded aside, restrained by necessity, he had thought that the self was wholly dead, merged in the great general panorama of things, the stream of outer life. But no! The fire was still hot within, the eternal will to express somehow, in some manner, the spirit that was specially his, moulded of his effort and his will. Here was that something for self which would not be denied. It was the flame of the artist, the poet, the lover, — purified, lambent, burning bright in its vessel. . . .

Thus in the silence of night hours, with the City voice coming upward like a faint surge of the sea, the eye of the Symbol upon him, he sat with bent head, seeing, writing, at work in a fever of will let loose, exultant. The germ of creation hidden in all men strove for its life in him. He was free to embrace it,

to give it sweep through his being, at last! So, caught in his theme, which beat with epic force upon him, he spent his strength, all the vital force in him, in this effort for final expression. It was the guerdon of God to him who had sought the truth and embraced it, this bit of precious work, this self to be made evident.

And what a theme! The bland eye of the Symbol seemed to connive with his daring, then mocked him. It began in the dim, remote origins of things, when Property was the garment for man's spirit, the covering for his nakedness, the sign of his manhood. Then onwards through ages of conflict and wild war, with emerging laws and bonds, Property held sway uncertainly, until at last in the clamorous present it had become the worshipped idol, the engine and the end of human life, before which the multitude bowed down in desire and fear. And the spirit of life lay strangled within the garment. The idol had become stronger than its maker. Manifold and cunning laws were devised to protect this idol. Life became cheap, — so many dollars for limb or eye or body, — but Property became more precious, guarded by the sanctity of Law. Ten laws were enacted on behalf of Property for one of other laws. A trained body of the best minds was employed by the owners of property to defend their rights against all other rights. Justice, Mercy, Love became weak before the sacred idol. Nay, heaven had become confused with earth in the worship of Property, and its golden halls were moved from the sky. The garment was all: the spirit had faded from within!

In this vast virgin land where the winds swept free over plains and hills from ocean to ocean, a new people had come to live in the highest freedom to work their wills, in their hearts a dream of noble perfection, and the idol set up in their midst even here had eaten their freedom. Men had proved that the desire of their hearts being free was to get Property: "life,

liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" meant Property, got and hoarded. They had coined the snows upon the hills into property; the waving trees in the forest; the rivers and lakes, the minerals under the ground, and the fruit of the seed above — all was Property, something possessed by one and coveted by another. Until the day was now dawning when, all property being parcelled out and possessed, the struggle to get waxed hot; men fought among themselves like dogs about a bone, in their hunger for Property. The strong prevailed, and the children of the strong ate, while the weak hungered and the children of the weak died unpossessed. The cunning contrivance of law fastened the chains of Property upon its slaves, not for a term of years, but for generation after generation. Children that had not yet entered the womb in the vast abyss of uncreated purpose were destined to hunger, and others were destined to possess. It was a life for a life, not merely among the living and the dead, but among the yet unborn. And men said this was good, lying in their hearts. . . .

As he thought and worked, his theme grew in magnitude until it absorbed all. It flamed in pictures in his mind, unrolled itself in long lines of figures, descended into the homes of the little in the byways and ascended to the temples and institutions of the world. It swept from ocean to ocean and circled the globe on thin wires. It spoke in mockery and fine irony in the mouths of President Butterfield and Thomas Talbot; it hissed in hate in the mouth of the Anarch. Like a colossus of silent will it acted in Alexander Arnold. When Property and the ideas of Property were stripped from men, what remained? . . .

Fatigued with his task, he would take it with him into the streets of the City at night, wandering up and down the long, empty avenues, shining in streams of light — blinking guardians of Property — back and forth through dark cross streets

from the hills to the water, in and out among the towering bulk of great buildings in the heart of the City. The earth itself was covered with a close garment of Property, each thread in the web with its special privilege, its special burden. The City was one vast mound of Property, heaped upon the earth. He passed the great Bank of the Republic, shuttered and closed, guarding in its vaults innumerable titles to property. There beneath the ground, in steel-ribbed vaults, Property lay in its last fine essence. Hired guards patrolled above and below its hidden shrine. A thick, round door of massive steel, beside which sat all day the fat guardian of treasure, was closed and bolted with an ingenious care. And the secret pipes for deadly gas coiled in and out of the inner shrine of the sanctuary to kill any who might disturb its hoard. The bronze gates of the great bank were barred, the doors closed. In the night its white façade had something cold and menacing about it, spurning the stranger, the beggarly wayfarer who rested on its steps. And yet in its cold aloofness, all shut and barred, crouched among a group of tall buildings, cowering there over its laden vaults, the Bank of the Republic suggested above all FEAR. That was the terrible secret of Property — it bred Fear! Guarded by steel and stone and deadly engine, Property was afraid! Far below the pavement the living guardian patrolled the hole beneath and above the steel vault, and reported duly by electric signal his constant presence. Within the shrine slept the bits of bright coin, the bundles of stamped paper, the strips of bond and stock, — symbols of Property. And these more precious than life itself, than the lives of the sleeping millions, were close watched, triple guarded even in sleep. For Property made cowards of men. That was the last word!

Returning in the gray dawn from such a pilgrimage through the City, Hugh Grant found the Anarch, Wethered, in the

attic chamber, sitting astride the table, the sheets of his writing in hand, reading with a sneer on his lean face.

"So you have taken to scribbling," he observed. "You pay your respects to the sacred institution, I see —" He read phrases from the manuscript in his hand. "You do not seem to agree with our friend Gossom." He nodded to the burning Symbol. "This is what the weak-minded always have done, — scribbled in verse and prose their protest to their masters! What do *they* care? They will buy your stuff if it is amusing, and put it away in their libraries for a curiosity!"

"I write for myself!" Hugh rejoined quickly.

"For yourself! What are *you*? What is any one, alone?" He dropped the papers, and beating the table with his clenched fist demanded savagely, "Why don't you *do* something? Do *something*, I say! instead of sitting here spilling ink upon paper to record your precious thoughts. Even *they* would despise that, — whining in idealistic phrases instead of putting your fist into the game! Either take the world and eat as others do, or take it by the throat."

"I have done something," the other replied quietly.

"What?"

"I have lived."

The Anarch waved his hand derisively.

"Live — do you call it living?"

"I earn my living daily at the Bank of the Republic."

The Anarch laughed loudly.

"Back to the bench? Starved out! And is that all you have got from the welter of experience — to take the daily bit of bread for the daily work? Even your masters might teach you a better lesson. They at least are effective: they count."

"And I count, too! . . . But what have *you* done?"

"I," said the Anarch, grimly, "have been in prison for the last six months. Interfering with the hand of law, which was somewhat bloodily beating its precepts into an offender. It is

a fearful crime to raise your hand against the servant of the law, especially when that servant is doing his duty for his masters! . . . There were a number of murderers in jail with me, but as they had not sinned against Property, they will soon be free."

"You have been in prison — is that effective?"

"Yes, by God!" the Anarch affirmed fiercely. "'Tis about the most one can do now — to show men what life means in a 'free country.' I was locked up because I tried to save a man from being beaten after his bread had been taken out of his mouth. It teaches a lesson to those who can understand. Shows what law is — what it is made to do. . . . There is more work coming, and that soon. Instead of sitting up here by yourself scribbling your silly thoughts, join us, share the labor and the risk, — do something for mankind!"

"What?"

The Anarch seated himself and began in a more philosophical vein.

"Did it ever occur to you, my dear little bank clerk, in your prosperous days, when you sat at the tables of the rich and were a good citizen according to the code, what it would mean if a fair proportion — far less than half — of the people in this country should agree to abstain from buying anything but the raw necessities to keep life in the body — say for six months? For six short months! This thing we call civilization would crumble like rotten cheese. The whole concern would have to suspend!"

"And do you expect to induce a fair proportion of good citizens to starve themselves for half a year for the sake of teaching your lesson?"

The Anarch smiled.

"As yet our people are too corrupt! Their masters have bought them off too often by filling their bellies. Wages are

forced upward, and every simpleton has the promise of selfish betterment dangled before him—the wisp of hay before the Ass. . . . But in this method of the masters there must come a crack—it is coming!”

“At this time of prosperity?”

“And high prices. What does prosperity mean to the man who buys? The cattle have been too well fed: they will expect always the same good food. The crack must come. Watch! You will see a skirmish here and there, even now in these piping days of peace and prosperity,—demands for more—”

“They will be bought off again!”

“Ah, there is where the crack begins. With the top-heavy vessel that the Plunderers are navigating, an end must come to that gamesome day—soon. Already trouble is appearing; like little boils it is breaking out, here and there, a quarrel over the living wage. It will spread and spread until it covers the whole country with a mass of sores. First a railroad, then a mill or a factory, will be shut, until the machine is out of commission. Then we shall try conclusions.”

“Meanwhile you will hasten the good time by breaking the law?”

“The law!” The Anarch kicked a book into the corner. “When it comes to the real thing, there won’t be much law.”

“Instead, dynamite—”

“Dynamite or the sheriff’s pistol—what is the difference? Force and cunning are the common weapons,—the only two.”

“Never!”

“Ask Arnold! Ask Butterfield! Ask Oliver Whiting!”

“Neither force nor cunning—they give no solution.”

“My dear poet,” the Anarch sneered, “I am wasting valuable time here with you. My business is with men, not cowards. With men who do not shrink from bloodshed, who are not afraid to handle dynamite instead of phrases. I leave

you to your mentor!" He waved his hand mockingly to the Symbol.

"And do you think me a success?"

The Anarch surveyed him compassionately, saying:—

"No, I should say that you had failed in every way that a man could fail. So I will leave you to your poetic consolation in this my old haunt. I have moved on to other quarters, which are more spacious."

He laughed ironically. With his hand upon the door, he turned and said:—

"Do you remember the girl Minna? The little one who had her hand sewed up in the machine down there? I saw her on the street as I was coming here."

"Minna?"

"Yes — Minna. You once had a sentimental interest in her, I believe. You shuddered when I painted her fate. Well, she has achieved it at last! She is — a whore."

"What!"

"That is what our society calls a woman who has the bad luck to be forced to live by her sex without the law's sanction. . . . Oh, it began some time ago. I suppose you were noble enough to refrain from taking your pleasure. Or was it that you were merely prudent? But our friend Ellgood helped himself to Minna's slender charms. They had a little nest somewhere in the City, and heaven went on until Ellgood became quite successful and was able to range himself in his class by marriage. Then Minna, who had become corrupted by her taste of luxury, took the only means she had to reproduce heaven, on a lower scale."

"Poor little Minna!"

"Don't sentimentalize because you happen to remember tenderly this little Minna. She is no longer the tender fresh little thing your poetic fancy remembers. And hers has not been a bad case. At least she has had some

real sensations—some soft hours and some gay ones, though of late I gather she has rather taken to drink to keep up the inspiration of life. . . . Look for her, my poet, and study the universal law in the person of Minna, the girl with the maimed hand. It is all there, you'll find. You will get more from Minna than from that stuff."

He pointed disdainfully at the sheets of manuscript upon the table, smiled, and departed.

The gray dawn had fully come. The lamp of Success had gone out. The City, groaning at labor below, seemed clouded in ashes. The hot and acrid breath of the Anarch had breathed upon his inspiration and scorched his faith. He prepared to go to the Bank, and his thought turned to the woman Minna, wandering somewhere in the streets of the City. . . .

Even that something of self in which he had taken joy—that personal and inner justification of the man's soul within him before his Maker—was wrong. As he threaded his way toward the marble temple of Property, his eyes kept looking hither and thither in search of Minna.

XLII

THE BACCHANAL

"POWER" was booming in the market.

The Anarch's fierce prophesy yet failed of its fulfilment. A year of triumphant prosperity drew to a close with ever rising prices, throbbing industry, tremendous business of a busy people. The promise of the fathers, the destiny of the nation, were being accomplished. So it was printed, and men repeated it to themselves upon the streets. The wise ones pointed to the evidence of universal well-being in ticker strokes, clearing-house sheets, bank balances, crop reports, railroad earnings. "See what happens for all when we are let alone!" they said. "The people are busy, wages are high, money is pouring from the soil. 'Tis a great country when we are let alone!" Here and there were to be heard the mutterings of discontent, the demands of greedy labor to share in the increase, like the distant rumbling of thunder on a cloudless summer day. Hospitals and refuges were crowded; desolate figures emerged on the gay avenues from side streets, — mere competitive refuse of ninety millions, these! And the lengthening line of black figures tramping the lofty bridge to the task and homeward at evening, — what had they to say of these happy, prosperous days? What the masters gave with the right hand they took away with the left.

But "Power" was booming, — "index of prosperity," solemnly affirmed Todd in the *Daily Judgment*. The lords of destiny were carving at the table, dividing the fat pelf,

“cutting melons” (euphonious term!) according to their wont. The dizzy figures of the market sheet spelled happiness. Thus the holidays came and men rejoiced, each in his way. The New Year was at hand.

The New Year, — oh, beautiful hope! The New Year which would conspire with fate the trickster to bring about the secret desire of every heart. And the eve of this New Year the streets were full of people, — girls from the sweat-shop with their young men, women from the great houses in their cars, old and young, poor and prosperous, big and little, flowing in solid masses along the thoroughfares, — all with the spirit of hope and happiness in their hearts. The old year was gone. Good or ill, it was lived through somehow, with its laughter and its tears, its hunger and its plenty, its failure and its success. Hail to the New Year! For man is a gambler ever, praying in his heart to the goddess to give him the unknown joy, his heart’s desire. So the common people sang and shouted in the streets, blew noisy horns, pelted each other with colored paper, made merry in boisterous ways to show their faith in this greatest of all lives and in this best of all years about to be. And those who had shared in the carving of the pelf sat about hotel tables and drank yellow wine at great price in honor of prosperity and another glorious New Year.

Hugh was returning to his room late that New Year’s eve, alone in the noisy multitude. He was weary in body, not merely from the fatigue of the streets, but with a slow, dragging weariness that had recently beset him. However, he was content, absorbed in the rejoicing people, sympathizing with the common joy, the reckless gayety and hope for the venture of the New Year. There was a savage light upon the faces of the men pushing their way through the dense crowd, in their eyes a brute will to be glad. The same revelling spirit of determined joy shone through the lighted windows and open doors of the hotels and restaurants. In the glare of intense

light men and women were packed close about the tables, eating and drinking, the corridors and anterooms filled with the supper-parties. Waiters squirmed among the close-set tables, bearing above their heads bottles of yellow wine. At the corner about Lorillard's fashionable restaurant the avenue was almost impassable, with the throngs on the pavement awaiting the signal of the New Year.

At last the boom of a distant gun, then the clang of innumerable bells! The air became at once full of confused sound, — horns and whistles vying with the deeper tones of bells, filling the mild heavens with a high-pitched noise of jubilation. Boom! Toot! Clang! The New Year had come. Up and down the gamut of sound the air vibrated with discordant joy. It was one universal will to be glad, to hope, shrieking in myriad tones.

Hail to the New Year! The wonderful, mysterious, good New Year! As the bells frantically clanged and the noisy pedestrians tooted horns, the diners within the restaurants raised their glasses and drank the toast of the year amid shouts of laughter, maudlin cries, — each in his condition and kind expressing the common will to live and be glad in this new space of time. . . .

Near the corner of the avenue where the lights from Lorillard's rooms shone upon the dense throng outside, Hugh was caught in the press and waited upon the steps of a little church. The wave of deafening sound bore him away above the heads of the multitude in the streets, over the glimmering mist of lights in the tall buildings, out into the soft heavens, suffused with light, resonant with voices. This was man's New Year — hope, courage, and the heart's desire! Man greeted his future with one long shout of courage.

Suddenly on all that voluminous discord there fell the silvery notes of chimes from the belfry of the little church. Not blending with the screams and jangling bells, but sounding

clear in a lower key, the chimes poured forth in sweet unison their message of the New Year. Hugh closed his eyes, and suddenly he seemed no longer in the noisy City, hemmed by the throng, but alone in a distant, silent room at dawn filled with a stream of silver melody. The voice of a great spirit was calling from afar to such as would heed, calling in its own low, peculiar note, unmixed with clamor, calling not to the sense, but to the spirit in men.

To him, as to all who listened for the undertones beneath the hilarious clamor, the silver tones spoke, "A new world, a new life I bring to the hearts of all! Lo, always thus, a new world, a new life, to be found in the hearts of those who listen! Struggle and failure, success and joy, they are of the body in its raiment, but within there is neither sorrow nor failure. For in me is Life! All else is but the mist upon the eyes, the mist of passing days. In me is Life!" the bells sang on, in higher key, climbing upwards in aspiration. "And in me, the spirit within, there is no failure, no defeat, no despair, no sorrow! To *you* I speak, the one alone in the multitude who will give heed,—a new world, a new life—" . . .

The chimes ceased, and the booming jubilation of the great City seemed to be hushed, the boisterous throngs less noisy. An old man clung unsteadily to the paling of the church fence, looking up to the belfry, and behind his bleared eyes there was a gleam of that other hope,—a small space of calm and understanding that Hugh, passing the stranger, saw. . . . The crowd was now dissolving rapidly in the street; the feasters were pouring from the doors of the restaurant. The fête was finished for the year! As Hugh slowly made his way past the restaurant, there was a disturbance about the glass vestibule where men and women were standing waiting for their cars to approach. A woman with a large hat tipped awry on her dishevelled head was clutching at the arm of a man in a long coat with silk hat, who had just come from the restaurant.

"Yes — you come with me!" she was saying thickly. "You know me all right." The man, embarrassed, was trying to get away from her, and those near by laughed wantonly, all warmed with wine and merriment. Finally the man, with a fierce movement, shook off the woman's clutch, and she fell unsteadily across the step, while the bystanders drew aside. Raising herself, with her hands on the pavement, she cursed the man with frank indecency. Hugh lifted her to her feet, and, still cursing the man, who was edging away, she said drunkenly, "Don't know me!"

She made a lunge to follow the escaping man. Her outstretched, ungloved hand had but two fingers, with a long scar running up the wrist. "You don't know your Minna!" she shrieked. The people, even in their vinous mood of New Year fellowship, were shocked by the woman's language, and moved away. Hugh, grasping the maimed hand, dragged the woman by force into the crowded street, trying to quiet her cries. Perceiving a policeman pushing his way forward, he led her behind an advancing car, where they might escape in the throng.

A lady in the car bent forward and looked at the two closely.

"It's getting rowdy," complained the man at her side, — the banker Oliver Whiting, — who had not wished to join the party at Lorillard's.

"That is Hugh Grant!" his wife exclaimed, "the man with the woman."

"Grant!" the banker said, and looking back, watched Hugh's efforts to guide Minna's uncertain steps through the press. "A common woman of the streets with him! He must have fallen pretty low."

His wife, looking fixedly at the two, made no response, and as the car at last extricated itself and turned into the avenue, each settled back into a corner, silently, very much apart. It had been a fatiguing day for

and its houses, of dead will. Hugh rose to close the windows, his pain stilled for the moment, but his mind keenly alive, strung taut by the blast of fresh wind. It roared past the windows with a peculiar large voice that pierced him, exhilarated him. . . . When he turned, Minna was sitting up and staring confusedly.

"Where am I?" she demanded in a low voice.

"Don't you remember me, Minna?" he asked. "You knew me years ago," he added, as her eyes still stared dully at him. "When you used to work in the shop down there — the shirt-factory!"

"I used to work in a shirt-factory," the woman said slowly. "That's where I got that!" She held up her maimed hand. "But I don't remember you, — what's your name?"

"Hugh Grant," he answered. "Don't you remember, Minna," he urged, "how we used to go out into the country —"

"Oh," she interrupted, brushing her hand across her face, "you were the young feller that talked poetry to me. Yes — I remember. What's your name? Grant? Hugh Grant — one Sunday. . . . There's lots that's happened since then."

She sat staring before her, seeing ghosts, and presently she said:—

"How did I get here?"

"I found you in the street and brought you here. You wouldn't tell me where you lived."

"Oh," she laughed, "where I live! It's not much matter where I live — I must have been pretty bad — celebrating."

Slowly she pushed back her heavy hair and slowly reached for her hat.

"Where are you going?" Hugh asked.

She waved her hand impatiently.

"Anywheres, I guess. . . . Why didn't you take me then?" she demanded, her dull eyes open and suddenly

ablaze. She rose and stood by the table opposite him. "You could have had me then for the taking — I was ready for you. . . . But you wouldn't, somehow. Then the other, and the other, and all the others!" She made a sweep with her hand. "Tell me — why didn't you take me then?"

A gust of the wind shook the old roof and whirled away with a robust clatter over the city buildings. Hugh saw in the blurred creature before him the girl of that afternoon years before, with her tempting eyes, her waiting lips, and he remembered the wild leap of desire in his pulse, — that spring day beside the brook. And suddenly from his lips came the answer without his intent:—

"Because, then, I could have done nothing for you now!"

She stared at him in doubt.

"What can you do for me now?"

"Everything!" he said, unconscious of the word until it was uttered.

Minna laughed, — a dreary, dry laugh, and her eyes seemed to sweep over the bare attic room, its poor furniture, the slight, haggard figure of the man.

"I guess," she said hoarsely, "there's nothing much you nor any one can do for me now."

"Yes!" She had started for the door, and turned at his exclamation, which had the sharpness of a command.

"There is — " A spasm of pain shooting through him silenced him; then with an effort he ended, "Life!"

"Life!" All the scorn of defeated generations, of years of soiled hopes, sounded in the word. "Life for me!"

Another spasm of pain made him silent with contracted brow, and then he brought out in a whisper, "For *you*!"

He sat down and leaned heavily on the table.

"You're sick!" Minna exclaimed. "What's the matter?"

"I don't know," he muttered.

fortable, and left him in peace, tended frequently by the woman Minna, who would come and sit with him evenings when the others had left.

The day came when he could make the journey to the Bank no more; in company with Venable he crossed the great marble rotunda for the last time. He paused at the edge of the marble screen to watch the clerks counting the piles of money, sorting their papers, and making ready to leave for the day. The light tinkle of coin fell softly in the hushed building, and the deft fingers of the men moved automatically at their tasks. The familiar task, to which he had come as a youth in ignorance, from which he had revolted in desire for freedom, filled him now with a strange regret. It was part of that tissue of the visible world which he was laying aside. Venable, sympathetically understanding his wistful gaze, remarked: —

"After all, fate placed us well in putting you and me into this particular shop. Of all life to-day it is nearest the heart of things. You and I have touched the springs, even as oilers and wipers!"

"Yes!" Hugh agreed, gazing upwards into the lofty dome, "the Bank gives understanding of men. Here man is naked and shameless before his desire."

He made an excuse to descend to the vaults, where the fat guardian of the strong room was preparing to close the huge steel door upon the treasure within and was setting the clocks for the Sunday sleep.

"No one will get a peep in there until I'm here next Monday morning," the fat man happily exclaimed, as the mechanism of the great lock began to revolve, shooting in the bolts. "We are tight and safe now — only an earthquake could open it up!"

"Only an earthquake!" Hugh murmured. "It will take the hand of God to separate men from their treasure."

As they left the dim vaults where slept in complete security multitudinous titles to Property, Venable said, "Our friend below has a personal pride in his strong box. He sits there like a fat figure of Minos, gasping for breath, and thinks he is somehow cheating mankind, holding back the hungry horde from what it most desires. He would die a thousand deaths before that round hole in the steel vault! And so would Oliver. It is a form of loyalty."

The uniformed servants were closing the bronze doors of the Bank and swinging outwards the heavy gates. Under the golden haze of the sultry March evening the crowd was pouring from the great buildings and streaming along the pavements. Hugh and Venable made their way slowly in the throng. The picture of this human stream between the two walls of the city cañon, with the evening haze dimming the vista, was never so beautiful to the sick man as this night when he was leaving it. The preoccupied or careless faces, the figures jostling him on the pavement, had a human warmth to them. If each might speak out, the call would be, "Brother, brother,— coming my way in the stream of life?" . . .

"You know," said Venable, "Oliver may return to us."

"Indeed!"

"It seems as if the courts of Europe had been less alluring on close inspection than they looked from this side of the water. He resigned his post after a couple of years. I should suppose that his wife would have kept him there longer. But Oliver Whiting is more of a figure in this City than anywhere else on the globe, and after being a banker and a philanthropist combined in a city like this, it is hard to become a mere ambassador to a foreign sovereign. . . . He opened the new gift of Arnold the other day, I see. He will probably be the figurehead merely, at the Republic, and continue to open museums and preside at hospital boards."

Hugh smiled. It was a comfortable and honorable destiny

sketched by Venable for the successful banker; Alexandra would aid him in this destiny.

Late in the evening Minna came, as usual, to spend an hour with the sick man. They had not spoken of her fate since the New Year's night. They had ignored all the years since she was the factory girl. To-night Hugh said to her:—

"Minna, I have left the Bank for good."

"You feel worse, then," she said heavily.

"Yes, — it cannot be long now." The girl waited, looking at him steadily. "I have earned little," he said. "I have saved little. That little will be yours, Minna."

She made a gesture of indifference, and turned to the window through which poured the steady beams of SUCCESS. Suddenly throwing up her hands, she exclaimed in savage irony: —

"And that is life!"

Hugh raised himself from the couch where he had been lying.

"It is life," he said, "and I have no quarrel with it."

She looked at him through the tears in her eyes.

"And you must have no quarrel with it, Minna," he added softly. "It is both terrible and beautiful, — ay, very beautiful!" He stepped to the window, and taking her hand in his, stood looking into the yellow light from the Symbol and through it to the horizon of roofs and throbbing lights beyond. "For life," he murmured, pressing the woman's hand tightly, "lies chiefly within!"

A spasm of pain shot through him, and Minna helped him back to his bed. She lingered awhile about the room and then went, saying, "I'll be back in the morning early."

After Minna had left, Hugh dozed in the intervals of his pain, then rose and tried to write. But the meaning had gone out of his words, — all the intense fire of purpose with which they had been clothed. The Anarch was right: the world needed the deed, not the word any longer. There had

been overmuch thought and talk, too many voices feebly proclaiming a light, now here, now there, with egotistical vanity in their own discovery. It was a word-weary age, this; it hungered for deeds. And the importance of the great institution of Property was already fading from his thoughts, with the decay of his tissue. It had blinded him as it blinded all men. In truth, it was not for him to speak the flaming word about this idol that had killed the spirit,—for some other it might be! He gathered up the notes and written sheets upon his table, and dragging himself to the fire scattered them on the ashes, watching them shrivel and crisp, then break into a momentary flame and die, each to a curled ash with faint traces of ink marks.

“Failure!” he muttered, shot with sudden pain at the dispersal of his final purpose. “All failure!” He crawled to the open window and looked down into the warm night, the dim emptiness of space about him. The bright sign shone steadily on his bent shoulders like a mocking eye. “All failure,” he murmured.

The little panorama of his life sped through his aching thoughts, from his foundling birth to his end,—the setting forth for conquest in the City, the place he had made for himself at the Bank, his service in the power company, the sweet joy of his love for Alexandra,—the azure sky and the white snowdrifts of the mountains and his beating heart with her body next his,—the pilgrimage with his Anarch guide over the land, learning what life is to the unprivileged, his refusal, his attempt to right a single little wrong in the vast network of Evil Will and its failure, his simple protest and its feeble accomplishment, the final desire of his soul and its failure. All failure! And in this dim silent hour of despair the tempter of tempters came to him on the bland beams of the electric sign. “To be effective in some manner, to leave some mark graved upon existence,—that is the only excuse for living! The feeble

are worse than the evil. For they are naught." The essence of the poison in the gospel according to Gossom!

The sick man, thus abased to the depth of his being, slowly raised his head with his last great denial. "No! Not failure, so long as there is not consent. Even the least of the dust," he muttered in the face of the Symbol, "is worthy, if it has refused to eat with the spoiler and become evil."


He closed the window and pulled the curtain, shutting out the light from the electric sign, and threw himself again on his couch. And as he lay there, at last calm and serene, he saw that the devious steps of his feet had led but to one great purpose, — to fit him to die. For others the great deeds, the service and the accomplishment, for others fame and triumph: for him to die fitly, the dross of desire and self finally burned away from the spirit within. He fell asleep, thinking of Minna and what could be done for the woman after he had gone.

When he awoke it was still dark night, but the light from the electric sign no longer fell upon the curtained window. In the blackness around him it seemed that the building was swaying, then turning on its axis in a slow, powerful movement, like the twisting of a massive ship in the grip of a mountainous wave. He clung to his couch, thinking that he had gone suddenly blind, and that this was the vertigo of dissolution, while the vast heave and gyration repeated itself, again, and yet again — three, four, five several times. Then, in the lull of motion, he heard a mighty crashing, a clamor of dissolution, as if huge masses dislodged from great heights had been shot downwards into the earth. He groped his way to the window, and tore aside the curtain. The scaffolding and wires on the Gossom building were twisted into a confused mass. The great City was dark! Of its myriad lights not one burned in the black vault before his eyes. A hand had swept the horizon and brushed out the points of light. At last through the gray dimness of the dawn, he could see the twisted façades

of buildings, the roofs awry, the rent structures of men, as if the mighty hand that had brushed away the light had torn asunder the earth and the buildings on it. . . . In the still air of the heavens he could hear the crashing of stone as great masses dislodged from cornices fell into the narrow streets. And then suddenly in the stillness of the air, amid the crashing of stone, came human cries, little, thin sounds of agony and fear, rising shrilly, as from an immense distance. Moment to moment these shrill little cries grew more terrible, more pervasive. . . .

He tried to get out of his room, and found that the door was twisted into its casing, and all his force could not free it. Penned in, he turned back to the window, and suddenly through the gray murk of the night came a puff of wind, then another, until the heavens were full of wind, drowning the feeble cries from the earth, hurtling the riven buildings in huge pieces across the streets. The floor beneath him rocked and swayed under the blow of the wind. He clung to the sill, expecting to be hurled forth into the pit below. But the blast sank, then rose again, with a great rushing sound as if it had come from space somewhere beyond the globe and struck the earth like a hammer, then glanced off, to come back with another blow from remote space. The trees in the park beneath bent like stalks of grass, and the buildings rocked and swayed, dropping pieces of stone from their bodies. And the voice of the wind, deep and full of rushing sound, was more awesome than its blows.

It was the voice of Power! A superhuman force seemed to whirl the great buildings in its awful grip. The base of things gave way and the moving air itself became support. It absorbed all sound in the volume of its rushing force. There was no cessation, no lull — one stream of terrific energy beating through space and tearing the earth by the roots. There in the attic of the swaying, tottering house, the



sick man stood, clinging to the jamb of the shaking window, and listening to the voice of Power. The thought of danger that had first come to him had disappeared, and in its place was a thrill of wonder and exaltation; he was resting in the hollow of the storm. It bore him up and away from the earth, stripping him of torpor and weakness. He seemed to live as never before, his mind and body tingling with consciousness, strung up the gamut of being. Thus, for what seemed a long time, until the uncertain light gave way to a sullen dawn under a gray sky, and he could see from his window the desolate stretch of crumpled and yawning buildings as far as the eye reached. The tangled web of the great sign had been swept away by the tempest, and the roof itself stripped off like the top of a man's skull, revealing the luxurious apartment where Gossom held sway. Gradually in the dust borne by the wind which veiled the forlorn City dull spots of red appeared, swelled like breaking sores, and threw off dark puffs of smoke. Fire was added to the wreck!

Watching these growing spots of fire, Grant thought once more of Minna, and became uneasy to know her fate. Crawling out of the window to the broad cornice, he slowly made his way in the lee of the roof to another broken window through which he entered and thus slowly escaped to the street.

A scene of devastation lay there beyond human power to grasp at once.

XLIV

THEN THE FIRE

FOR the strata of the earth on which the City lay, rooting itself deep into the ground, as if weary of the burden placed by man upon it — the much living of men — had slipped and shrunken, twisting its human garment, rending it fearfully. The broad straight avenues were pulled and sunken, and the serried rows of building walling them in had either crumpled together or stood at all angles, one to another, their tops curving perilously downwards as if about to fall. The power of the wind which neither steel nor bedded rock could withstand had hurled these fragments torn from lofty buildings hither and thither confusedly. It was the field of battle of the Titans.

And on the horizon in every direction the fires were spreading, their dull glow of red shot with inky smoke wallowing in the wake of the wind. . . . In the streets, men were running aimlessly to and fro, like excited ants after the upheaval of their home, shrieking senseless words with open mouths, while others cowered in the lee of standing buildings. These were windowless, gaping like blind, wracked monsters upon the distracted creatures who had lately been their masters. In the upper stories desperate men and women penned within cried to those beneath for help, but none gave heed, each one seeking in his terror safety for himself and the wretched things first grasped unconsciously in the desire to save possessions. All human dignity seemed stript from these creatures, bereft of their reason by the shock.

The individual, so mighty in his accustomed place, was now naked and afraid, — a pitiful, feeble ghost of himself.

The whirlwind that had struck the City such mighty blows sank to a fierce gale out of the north that fanned the fires, driving the pungent fumes of smoke through the tube-like streets. The day began to grow thick with smoke and dust. In this blinding atmosphere Hugh groped his way slowly through the streets, again and again turned back by barriers of crumpled refuse and yawning pits where cellars had opened. He stumbled over dead bodies, heard groans from dark holes in unlighted buildings. Men passed him, quarrelling and fighting over plunder; within a store partially wrecked a crowd swarmed, fighting for liquor to quell their fear. Across the street a woman shrieked for aid, and Hugh, going to her rescue, found the door open and the stairway clear, the woman standing beside the dead body of a man, shrieking in fright. He led her from the room to the street and resumed his way.

Now he met fleeing groups, some with little carts and baskets in which they had piled their things, and others almost naked. Streams of fugitives flowed into the broader avenues toward the higher ground, and Hugh, following the human drift, at last gained the crest of the City, where its scarred face sloped away on every side. That great avenue which ran north and south like a broad line cleaving the City in two was furrowed irregularly, from east to west, as if the vast subterranean sea had heaved and left its billow between the tall buildings. Here upon the hill it was calmer, and he could take a leisurely survey of the wide panorama of destruction. Under the fan of the high wind the fires were fast eating their way across the disk of the City, but the area of building was so enormous that as yet they had made slight progress. They were eating, bit by bit, settled as it were to a determined task that no might of man might resist.

The first breathless terror of the catastrophe passed,

the fugitives had gained some measure of self-control and method in their flight from the doomed place. Motors were making their way cautiously along the furrowed avenue, — cars filled with men and women with blanched faces, cars stuffed out with possessions, and the foot-farers carrying things in their hands, dragging things after them, — always things, in the instinctive need for possession. From the windows of the houses people stared at the procession of fugitives as if helpless or reckless of disaster. Thus some fled and others stayed.

Down the long avenue, now bereft of its pleasure parade, singularly forlorn and silent on this day of desolation, Hugh proceeded on his return to the lower City where Minna lived. Parties of men, organized with leadership, began to appear in the work of rescue. They went from house to house, knocking, calling, forcing doors, rousing the dazed and helping the injured. For already Authority was emerging from chaos, taking by right of will and manhood leadership in the crisis, struggling to stem the tide of license and fear. . . .

In that square opposite the vast hotel where the Prophet once played with the actress and lost his beard, a fight was going on about the possession of a large motor. As Hugh came abreast of the hotel, he saw men swarm over the coveted car and drag the sole occupant — a woman — to the pavement, then make off at a furious pace down the avenue in the captured car. The woman lay stunned on the pavement at the foot of the statue of America, the calm eye of the sculptor's goddess bent upon the prostrate form. Hugh hastened across the empty square to the still figure, knelt, and removed the fold of her cloak from her face.

It was Alexandra.

Her eyes were closed and her face was bleeding from the fall upon the pavement. Hugh looked for aid, but no fugitive

lessened his cry, and taking the lifeless form in his arms he carried her to a shelter in the vestibule of the hotel. Then he took the still body in his arms once more and staggered with her into the deserted building, laying her upon a broad lounge in the front room. He groped his way through the dim halls in search of help, but there was no one in the vast place to be seen or heard. So, taking some water from a table in the restaurant, he returned to the unconscious woman and bathed her face and forehead. He touched her lips with the cold water, and presently she opened her eyes and looked full at him for a long moment, then sighed and smiled.

"Alexandra!" he cried.

She smiled faintly again, and closed her eyes. At her smile the white mask of the older woman slipped from her face, and he looked into the face of the woman he had known long before, in the peaceful meadows of Paradise Valley, on the mountain heights among the snows.

"Alexandra!" he called.

"You have come back," she murmured. "Be still — a little while — I will be well!" She laid her hand on his arm, and on her lips there rested a little smile of content.

From the burning City outside came distantly and faintly the cries and shouts of men. A gust of wind swayed the torn hangings at the doors of the room, and brought in the acrid smell of smoke. The painted stucco of the huge false columns hung in shreds from the flimsy wooden skeletons on which had been plastered their magnificence. The great gilt candelabra that had hung in the centre of the room lay in a tangled mass upon the floor. The heavy rugs had been cast into heaps, and in them were caught the slender chairs and tables. All the tawdry grandeur of this hotel room, imitative in its splendor and typical of the City, had been shaken at one blow into its elemental cheapness. And through the deserted place filtered the cold, acrid air of burning buildings.

Thus they met after the years of their parting in this strange chamber of devastation, where once before they had met at the flood tide of youth, when his feet were on the steps of power. Alexandra lay on the couch, motionless, silent, with closed eyes, the little smile upon her curving lips, and he knelt beside her, waiting as she had bid. Her flesh was pure white, unflushed with the pulse of youth as he had remembered her. She seemed less in stature, — not wasted but worn, as if the years of her woman's life had not brought their rightful bloom. It was neither the joyous face of expectant youth nor the accomplished face of physical womanhood. It was the face of one arrested midway, in which the spirit is still writing upon the flesh. . . .

She opened her eyes, and looked steadily at him.

"So," she said, taking his hands in hers, speaking as if waked from deep sleep, "I come to you, as you said it might be — when I should understand." Then raising herself and with a luminous smile, she murmured, "When I had lost all, and all had abandoned me. . . . For now I know," she said softly, "what it is to lose all!"

No further word was needed. Upon her face he might read the story of the years, — wife not mother, princess not woman, power not love. Every joy she had willed had come to her save one, and none had filled her being. Like a beautiful scentless flower she had lived her years until she too had come to know the truth. And more, he saw in the peaceful eyes, the tender lips, that the truth had made her neither bitter nor small, but wise and strong to live.

"Alexandra!"

It was the man's cry, echo of that defeated self, which had called through the night, years before. The cry of sorrow for loss of parted lives, for loss of perfect union, fulness of complete life, — the waste, the weary waste of living!

She laid her hand upon his lips.

"It must be so," she said. "It must be so!" In her smile there was no repining, no regret. The pitiless road of sand led out of the desert, even to this. And so the hunger in his heart was stayed.

A crash of falling wall startled them from the trance in which they slept. The frescoed panel of the large room, picturing in gay figures of flower-laden girls the coming of spring to the earth, had fallen.

"We must go!" Hugh exclaimed, perceiving the cloud of smoke that floated in waves through the lofty corridor. Alexandra tried to rise.

"I was on my way to the Bank — my husband is there — in the City. But they took the car." She sank back exhausted. "A little longer," she murmured, with her calm smile. "It can make no great difference now."

So they waited. The cries of men in alarm, shouts of warning, reached them, then passed away into the general clamor. The bitter smoke drifted steadily through the empty rooms.

"The City is burning everywhere. The Bank must have been destroyed. But it makes little difference," she murmured. And with a touch of her old mockery, "The fine great museum we opened last New Year's has been destroyed, too. I saw the heap of ruins as I came past. . . . I hope the children are safe in the orphanage. I must go out there to see!"

She rose again and made a few unsteady steps.

"There, I can walk! . . . This room — a tattered sham!" She looked about the place where she had passed gayly in the thronged world, then turned to the entrance, and when he would leave her to find some car or carriage, she said: —

"To-day? To-day neither love nor money will command service. Come — let us go up to the ballroom above and see how far the fire has spread."

So, leaning upon him, she mounted the broad staircase to the gaudy, empty room above, and in the embrasure of one of its tall windows they stood side by side and gazed at the burning City around and beneath them. At the lower end of the City the scattered fires in the different sections had become blurred in one cloud of black smoke through which the highest buildings towered, some standing gaunt, untouched, others flaming with innumerable fiery tongues.

"My father's house has gone," Alexandra said, pointing to a black circle northwards, "and ours had started when I left in the car. . . . The orphanage must be safe — it is outside the ring of flame and smoke. But the Bank — it is completely hidden within the cloud!"

Men on horseback dashed past, shouting confused orders. An officer, seeing the couple in the window of the hotel, halted and motioned violently with his hand. They were oblivious to the warning, their eyes fixed upon the terrible scene beyond, and finally the man on horseback, with an exclamation, spurred away, leaving them to their fate.

Standing there in the midst of destruction, neither had thought for self or for the immediate present. Something larger than human fate had them in its grip; they were rapt together into another sphere. With parted lips, her hands clutched at her breast, Alexandra watched the crumbling City, — with the ceaseless drift of smoke cloud, the crash of falling masses, and the roar of flame, borne faintly through the air. The proud City was being stript of possessions, and through its dim streets men were fleeing, driven by flame and fear.

"It will be swept bare!" she cried. "Oh, God, what awful misery!"

Like a tremendous symphony singing the theme of life and death, man's struggle with fate, the mighty chords of wind and flame drew through their souls, lifting them up to the dark

carriages, taking with them always whatever possessions they could grasp, dropping in their haste and fatigue these bits of property, so that the streets were littered with the goods. Men and women, in a last pitiful effort to retain their property, cumbered themselves, endangered their lives, and ruffians preyed upon them as they fled.

Through this bewildered mob of thieves and heroes and cowards, the two with the child between them made slow progress, and at last reached those cavernous cañons where the lofty buildings on either side burning far up above the earth made such fierce heat that the pavements cracked beneath the feet. Turned back again and again, forced to a devious path, they came out finally upon the Bank of the Republic. The marble temple, sheltered in its corner by the embracing wings of the great building behind it, had escaped thus far all harm. It stood pale and aloof, the smoke drifting over its snowy surface, the flame playing rosily upon its white façade. It seemed to hold at bay even the whirlwind and the fire, jealously guarding in its depths the most precious of men's possessions. The marble figure of a woman bearing in her hands the symbol of the scales had been unseated by the commotion and lay headless in the street. That alone had thus far happened to Oliver Whiting's marble monument. The great gates were ajar, and a group of men stood in the doorway. They were in eager discussion about some matter when Alexandra and Hugh appeared. The fat turnkey of the vault jealously held the door, but, recognizing Grant, he opened it sufficiently to permit them to enter, then closed it carefully.

Under the dome it was twilight, and the great marble room, absolutely empty, was hushed in gloom. The voices and the heat from the burning City did not penetrate its chill seclusion. As they stood there for a moment in doubt, Venable appeared and came toward them.

"Is my husband here?" Alexandra demanded. "He started for the Bank long ago, very early in the morning — have you seen him?"

"Yes," Venable answered, in a hesitant voice.

"Where is he?"

"He is dead," Venable replied, without evasion, the strain of the terrible day making all tongues direct.

"Where is he?" Alexandra demanded, quietly, as if some one had told her an expected thing.

Venable pointed to the stairs that descended to the vaults.

"In the vaults? I will go there!" Taking the child with her, she stepped across the marble floor, and Venable followed her, saying gently, "You can't get in. It is sealed — closed tight."

"But why is he there?" she asked.

And then in a few words Venable told her what had happened, — how the banker, in his terrible anxiety rushing to the Bank to see what fate it had met, had found all safe, and descending to the vaults to assure himself that nothing had injured them, had not reappeared. After a time, when Venable himself and others had reached the Bank they had detected the deadly fumes of ammonia gas, and descending as far as the steel-barred gate below had seen the figure of Oliver Whiting within the gate at the entrance to the great vault where he had doubtless fallen, overcome by the deadly gas. Either the secret mechanism had been jarred into activity by the upheaval, or the guards that patrolled the room had set the device as they fled from the shaken building, thinking that the Bank might be sacked by the mob.

Thus Oliver Whiting had come to his end, at the door of the vault which held his property and the Bank's, in a vain attempt to reach the thing nearest his heart in this hour of catastrophe.

"We have succeeded in turning off the gas," Venable explained, "but we do not yet dare to enter the vault."

As he emerged upon the open square before the approach to the great bridge, the terrible beauty of the scene at this hour of the dying day burst upon him anew. That which man in his reckless, greedy haste to get money had failed to make of his home, the hand of the whirlwind and the fire had given it. At last the eating fires whipped by the wind focussed here at the southern edge of the City. The miserable tenements that crowded this part of the City around the bridge were covered in a thick cloud of smoke, through which shot little leaping tongues of fire. Behind them the lofty buildings stood like huge towers in the smoky heaven, belching fire from their many windows. Over all streamed the rack, illuminated with fiery particles of floating débris and comet-like showers of sparks.

The dreary dwellers in the tenements were being driven into the open square before the bridge, as the flames licked their homes, row after row, until a solid mass of human beings was pent in the narrow space, through which a company of soldiers strove in vain to keep open a lane for the cars and carts that pressed upwards to gain the bridge. Rich vehicles had been abandoned by their frightened occupants in the midst of the jam and looted by the frenzied mob. Hoarse shouts and the roar of the approaching fire, the sickening cloud of black smoke, added to the horror of the scene. . .

On a granite pillar of the parapet to the bridge appeared the figure of a large man, clinging to the bronze lamp. He was shouting to the heedless mob who were pushing and trampling one another in the effort to get foothold on the bridge. The man's loose coat was torn, and the thick beard and hair of his uncovered head waved in the wind. It was the Anarch, come into his own.

"Men!" he shouted to the struggling mob. "Go back! Go back into the city. Let the women and children, let the

rich and the cowards, escape. Now is your time! Now! The fire is the hand of God, doing your work for you. It is stripping the plunderer of his plunder. Go back!" and leaning down, he hissed into the faces of the fleeing mob, "The banks! They are left! Now is the time to complete the work. Blow up the banks! Blow up the banks!"

Some drunken hoodlums took up the cry and repeated it ironically: —

"Blow up the banks — to hell with the banks!"

But the pushing mob of men and women, with stern faces, bearing in their arms little children, scarce looked at the Anarch, as they fought for room on the bridge, which led to safety.

"Men!" the Anarch bellowed again. "Will you leave them their plunder in the bank vaults?"

The mob pushed on up the bridge-way.

"Men!" the Anarch shrieked. . . . There was the hoarse bellow of a motor horn at the approach below. A great car in which was seated a solitary figure of an old man, alone in the empty car, was plunging rapidly through the black crowd. The powerful car divided the human mass like the prow of a steamship, throwing men, women, and children aside amid a storm of curses. The driver crouched behind his wheel drove forward up the approach at full speed, intending to cut his way by brute force through the mass of human beings jammed between the parapets of the bridge. The old man sitting solitary in the great car looked forward unseeing into the crowd. Thus, bellowing its warning, cleaving the crowded roadway, the car shot toward the point where the Anarch stood.

Alexander Arnold — for it was he, making his belated escape into the country — sat impassive, motionless. At his leisure, after being driven from his home, he had made an inspection of the City, seen the great museum that he had built and filled

with the loot of beauty seized by fire, had watched unmoved the destruction of acres of buildings, the blowing up of houses and stores; then, his survey finished, judging the catastrophe complete, had ordered the retreat, and while still under the wrack of the burning City he had dismissed the thing from his mind, wiped it from the ledger, so to speak, and his busy mind was spinning a new web to be woven on the morrow that must come when only the ashes would be left! For all the millions that he would lose this day, he, Alexander Arnold, with his property stretching across the land from city to city, must inevitably make again tens and tens of millions. After the storm, labor, and the hand with money in it, could demand the best terms. Thus he thought, while his car drove steadily forward through the press of foot-farers on the bridge. . . .

The snout of the great car pushed its way, men dragging their women and children from its path, and it ploughed ruthlessly until, just gaining the level roadway opposite the lamp to which the hatless figure of the Anarch clung, a woman was caught and hurled under the car. A groan rose from the crowd, a curse of hate. The old white-haired man looked neither to the left nor to the right, and the frightened driver gave another touch of power to the machine. Then the Anarch dropped from his perch on the parapet of the bridge upon the car, his right hand reaching for the control, the left clutching the driver. For a moment the deadly machine slowed, and the mob with a yell closed thick about the car. . . .


The eyes of the father met those of the son. The Anarch's fingers loosened upon the lever, as the two thus confronted each other. the cold gleam from the brown eyes of the old man meeting the flash of hate in the Anarch's.

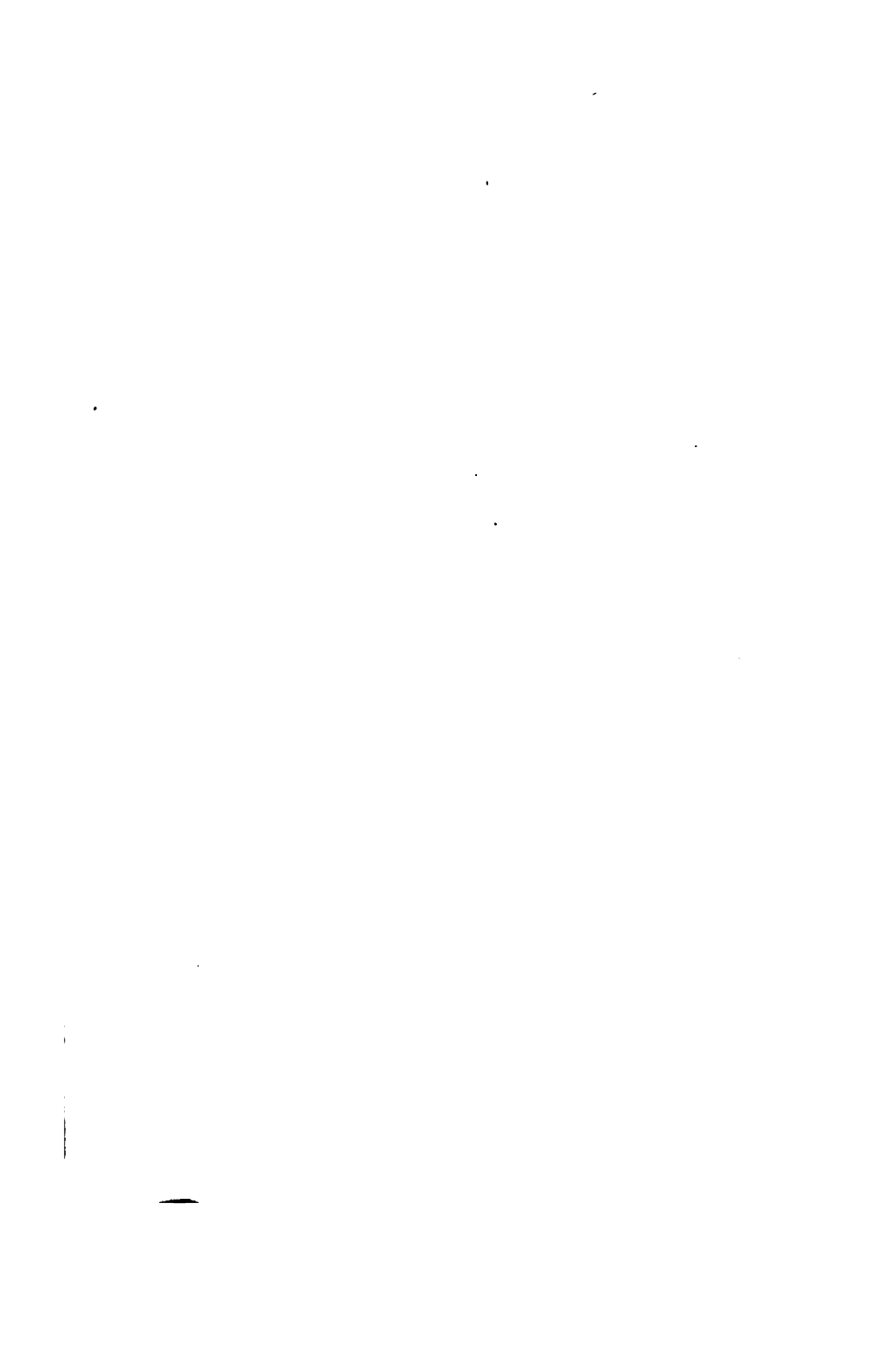
"You!" the Anarch cried. "You, at last!" and he raised his weaponless hand. . . .

"Drive on!" the old man shouted.

The frightened servant, free for the moment from the Anarch's grasp, touched the power. The great machine gave one lunge, leaped forward like a rearing horse, bearing the swaying Anarch on its step. In a moment the Anarch wrenched the wheel from the driver's hands and turning the car sharply, headed it towards the City. The shrieking crowd pressed back before the leaping car. . . . Shots rang out above the roar. But the car, plunging and swaying under the grip of the madman, raced into the furnace of flame, disappearing within the smoky cañon of a street. There was a crash, a roar of flame and smoke, as a lofty building toppled over into the street. . . . The Anarch and his father were answered — forever.

That was not the last sight in the stricken city that Hugh Grant beheld that nightfall, when the sun was setting upon the storm clouds. Pausing at a corner of the street to get breath and strength to go forward, he heard cries above him. And there on the cornice of an old house above were three men and a woman, cut off, trapped by fire, blinded by smoke. He shook in his helplessness, crying for succor for them. Then there passed him a man, and another, who paused, looked up, shouted encouragement, plunged into the burning building. He waited, sick at heart, until far above him in the drifting smoke he saw the kneeling figure of a man, stretching out across an abyss of sickening space, then another, — risking their lives to save. . . . It was done! And with a smile on his face at the thought of all the noble deeds like this being done that day, throughout the City, men giving themselves without one thought for self, men living at last freely and nobly, he went on his way, erect once more, pain forgotten, triumphant over death fast coming. Into the cloud wrack of smoke he disappeared from sight, — searching for Minna, the whore.





AFTER

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I

AFTER THE STORM

It was a wonderful spring morning, still and soft and full of golden light. The storm had spent its fury at last in a deluge of rain that had washed the wrack from the sky and quenched the eating flames. From the smouldering pits where the fire still persisted thin spirals of smoke rose straight in the pure air to the blue heavens, like the expiring breath of a slain monster.

On a hillside at the verge of the City where a large body of fugitives had found temporary refuge the birds twittered among the green thickets in the abandon of spring and the joyous sunlight. And the bedraggled men and women in motley garments, dirty and dishevelled, gathered about the camp fires before the tents and the sheds of a quarry where they had housed themselves and chatted lightly like the birds on this beautiful spring morning. A group squatted around one of the fires began to sing: the chant of a revival hymn with an absurd sing-song cadence filled the air, unmelodiously submerging the bird notes.

"Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin.
Each victory will help you
Some other to win!"

The men standing outside the circle joined in, beating time energetically with their tin cups.

"Fight manfully onward!" this male chorus shouted lustily.

"They seem perfectly happy," Alexandra observed to Ven-
able.

These two, having had their coffee, had climbed the cliff above the quarry and were gazing at the distant scene of desolation beneath the soft sky when the chorus caused them to turn and look at the fugitives about the fires.

"Of course they are happy! . . . A fine martial spirit, — that hymn. Even in our religious moods we have to fight. The sword in hand is the popular attitude for saint as well as sinner. But there's not much temptation in sight at present!" he added, as the women in thin treble continued:—

"To him that o'ercometh
God giveth a crown!"

And the robust male voices came in:—

"Fight manfully onward!"

"It is well that they can sing," said Alexandra, looking once more toward the City.

There the lofty buildings still dominated the devastation at their feet, like eyeless fortresses. But all the rest of the great City — north and south, east and west — undulated in a flat desolation. As far as eye could see the black ruin stretched, breathing here and there thin streams of smoke and vapor from its smouldering vitals. For weeks these sullen fires would keep at bay the eager searchers, seeking their dead and their treasure.

The great bridge still hung above the ruined City. It had withstood the whirlwind and the fire, offering escape to all who would take it until its approach had been barred by a wall of fiery flame. It was still safe, and across it this spring morning was streaming a black mass of moving figures. For already the fugitives were returning to the smouldering ruin of their City. Companies of soldiers were patrolling the streets, keeping back the curious and the lawless, directing the removal of debris from the main arteries, beginning the gigantic task of clearing away the colossal wreck.

"It is the beginning!" exclaimed Venable, pointing to the black stream on the lofty bridge.

"Will they go back there to live?" Alexandra asked, with a shudder of horror.

"Of course — why not? It is the place they have always known, in which their lives have been rooted. As a rule, in catastrophes like this one, the inhabitants flock back as soon as possible to the fated spot and build up again, — much as before."

"How can they begin again — there!" the woman murmured.

She was thinking of the streets starred with tragedies, deaths, — the very pavements calling out sadly of the past. And she was thinking also of the larger tragedy of the great City, which had been so manifestly full of wrong, less than it might have been in beauty and good living, stained with the evil will of its people.

"Mercifully," said Venable, "it is human to forget and to hope for a better future. . . . There are great business interests at stake in that rubbish heap of twisted steel, bricks, and mortar. There are the banks, with their vaults full of treasure, and the ground itself."

"So there will be no real beginning — no fresh start!"

Venable smiled at the impulsive woman's thought.

"Whatever new there is to be must be inwoven with the old, — always, I suppose."

"But here the earth has been cleared of mistakes," she protested. "Men have the chance for a fresh start."

"They are men," Venable replied, "and the mistakes are of their blood."

They turned to look again at the little group of fugitives below them. The men were already starting for the City to take part in the first labor of reconstruction, leaving the women and children behind them in the camp. These still dawdled about their breakfast or were putting their impromptu home

tremor to comfortable refuges at a distance, like President Butterfield, or being displaced as incompetent by abler and hardier men, — clerks, laborers, mechanics, any one who, like the Seal, had a stout heart, strong arms, and the will to do things for others.

So in those full days that followed the catastrophe, there was prodigious labor for all who would take part, — providing shelter and food and clothes, the first necessities of life for a cityful of human beings suddenly bereft of all and thrown homeless upon the earth. Alexandra and Venable labored ceaselessly with the others, organizing about the abandoned quarry a camp for women and children. Venable's wife and Madeleine Upton came from their homes to help.

The tale of those great days of stress is not to be told. It was written unforgetably upon the hearts of all who passed through the experience, who gave themselves without reserve to the common needs. To them it was like a glorious dream coming upon the nightmare of catastrophe in which they lived with a joyous freedom of will, a singleness of purpose, a sense of power that they had never known before and were never to know again. It was a time of special heroism which they were privileged to share, — days of superhuman effort, good will, sacrifice, and kindly humor. The personal loss, the personal sorrow, was forgotten or buried deep within. To dwell on loss and sorrow was ignoble when all suffered and all were brave.

At nightfall, after one of the long laborious days, Venable and Alexandra were resting on the hill above the quarry. The desolate City, no longer lamping its presence proudly to the sky, lay stretched beneath, its ghastly scars softly hidden by the twilight. No more the streams of smoke and vapor ascended to the sky, proclaiming life in the entrails of the expiring monster. The fire at last was dead.

Already the crowded camp was thinning, as the men made places for their families to join them nearer the City. Soon the temporary shelters about the quarry would be abandoned altogether.

"To-morrow," said Venable at last, "they will try to get at the vaults of the banks — they are sufficiently cooled now."

Alexandra, remembering what lay beside the vault of the marble Bank of the Republic, shuddered.

"And that is the end of all this?"


She looked at him questioningly.

"When the banks are open and the saloons, **THIS** will cease!"

He glanced back at the camp where the Seal was entertaining a group of children with the story of the famous bank vault and its hidden mechanism of ammonia gas, while he dealt out in impartial portions the evening meal.

"When the banks yield up their treasure," continued Venable, "and those who have money or titles to property are able to get at them, the Seal and men like him will no longer be leaders. The Seal will go back to the ranks, becoming again the faithful servant at the gate of property. He and the thousands of good men who have helped to make the pure democracy of our camp possible, showing their real metal, will sink once more to the levels of opportunity they had in the old order of things. Their manhood will no longer be needed. . . . Some will envy and some despise. The poor and the rich will draw apart from each other, instinctively taking opposite sides of the common street. . . . Do you remember how the Seal disciplined that fat broker's wife when she tried to get a whole tent for her private comfort? He made her ashamed, — even her! But think how she will treat him when she enters the new bank a year hence!

"Soon they will open the saloons, and then the beast in men that has been in leash these weeks will spring up. There has been no time for vice, because every energy of mind and



body has been employed. But when the saloons are open, we shall hear the growl of the beast once more!" . . .

So they talked of the few glorious days, telling over the splendid heroism of men and women, here in the twilight before the coming change. Alexandra was wrapped in a man's sweater and greatcoat which the Seal had given her the night of their flight. Her hands were stained with toil, her rich skirt spotted and torn, her beautiful hair covered with a boy's cap. Her face, like Venable's, was lined with deep marks of fatigue, and hollow-eyed. All that she had considered since her birth to be necessities had been stripped from life, and she had scarcely known it, nor thought whether they would ever be hers again. A great reality had taken their place, and in the glow of this new freedom, unconscious of self, she lived as one new born into the world.

Freedom! She was free, like all these others, at last, — free in spirit, and moved without the limitations that the world had created for her, that she had created for herself, in a new and lofty plane.

"It must end sometime, I suppose," she murmured with a sigh. The cry from the depth of her soul was, "That we might always be like this, free!"

"One could not live long at such a pitch — fighting fate," said Venable. "But it is good to know that men have it in them, — common men. It took the hand of God to shake the City and strip its people of all their possessions. Then, when they were naked and bereaved, the spirit within them was released, and for a little while they have become themselves, — large and free. . . . Again and again it has been so in the history of mankind. It will be so forever, as long as man endures. When the cataclysm comes it is not the beast but the man that emerges! . . . And in times of calamity it is always the little, unknown ones — submerged and ignored in the clamorous days of self-seeking — who show most of the

divine power. Their force has not been wasted in foolish desires. There!"

He pointed to the camp below where Madeleine and the Seal were waiting upon the children.

"It has been one large family camped in these fields about the City!"

"It must last — something of it!" Alexandra exclaimed. "Something of the spirit must be kept alive, — the courage, the generosity, the forgetfulness of self. No one who has passed through the fire can wholly forget what men and women were meant to be!"

"It will become a glorious dream."

"Only a dream!"

"It was the dream that Hugh Grant saw — and the faith he died in was that it could come to be reality; that one could live the dream even in the streets of the City."

It was the first time that Hugh's name had been spoken. Alexandra's deep eyes shone brightly as she thought of the man dead in the ruined City, whom at the last she had known.

"His life was one long defeat," Venable continued gently, "and triumph! Even to the end, when disease seized him. His was a spirit at war with circumstance, but the spirit overcame."

"Yes!" Alexandra murmured, seeing him as he was that last time in the burning hotel, the light of the unseen in his eyes. In silence they thought of this man, his ashes scattered in some byway of the desolate City, — the foundling. And they knew that he had triumphed, as Venable had said.

"To break the circle of ideas that dominate men," Venable said, after a time, "that was what Hugh Grant believed must be done. The vicious circle was broken here for thousands by an act of supreme force from without. But it must be done singly, individually, each with himself and those nearest his influence. The great end cannot come through political

action, by theory or programme, by any division of the spoils, any readjustment of laws, but only by Will — the individual good will to renounce, working against the evil will to possess. . . . A dream!"

He looked back at the little groups of fugitives gathered about the fires.

"At least for men and women full grown. Among them there can be found a few rare exceptions — special souls who are willing to leave the game, renounce winning — a few, a very few only. The habit of men's lives is too deeply grooved to change. So they will go back to dig in the ruins, to open the bank vaults and mark out their plots of private earth. They will build up again as they are. . . . But the children — something might be done with them! They are plastic. If they could be removed from the world as it is and another set of ideas supplied them for motives, the vicious circle might be broken — who knows? Another dream!"

Alexandra followed his musing words intently, her eyes fastened on the bright light about the quarry shed beneath them. The organist's widow came up the path with a little child by her side. It was the waif that Hugh Grant had put into Alexandra's arms in the hotel, whom she had kept with her all these weeks. The child, perceiving her, came running forward. Alexandra took it in her arms and held it up, caressing its small face with her hand.

"The dream shall come true for this one," she murmured softly, "and for others also!"

Childish voices rose from below in the words of a song. The thin notes on the pleasant evening air were like the twittering of birds. The young sang, joyously unmindful of all that had been lost, of the stern future before them. Foundlings, these, waifs from the great flight, bereft of their parents, who for the most part lay buried in the ashes of the City — They sang their little song at twilight, and found life good.

"They are the only ones worth working for!" Venable exclaimed. "They will make the world what it is to be. Shall it be Gossom's or Hugh Grant's? It will depend in good part upon the ideas they absorb now — their mental and spiritual food."

"They shall be my children," Alexandra said softly, clasping more tightly the little child that Hugh Grant had put in her arms. . . .

Thus the foundling whose life seemingly had gone out in complete negation — a failure, a feeble protest against the lamping Symbol — achieved in spirit at last.

III

PARADISE VALLEY

ONCE more Alexander Arnold's vast estate was occupied, its hall upon the hill verberant with voices. Its master was not there. For neither he nor his son, the Anarch, was found after the destruction of the City. They had died together in the fiery furnace about the approach to the Bridge. Nor had the banker, Oliver Whiting, lived to enjoy his wife's princely estate. Weeks after the disaster workmen under the direction of Venable penetrated to the vault buried beneath a vast weight of steel and marble, which once had been the bank of the Republic. Nothing that could be recognized as human was left on the threshold of the strong box. The banker had become, indeed, dust scattered about his treasure. The steel vault, however, had preserved intact its hoard of money and precious papers, and so, many rejoiced at recovering their property, which would save them toil and place them at advantage over others in the struggle to rebuild the City.

Alexandra, fatherless and widowed, her woman's love sealed in the tomb of the great City where the one most loved had died, opened Paradise Valley for her family of children. Henceforth it was to be the home of foundlings, — especially of those waifs from the great disaster who most needed shelter. In its pleasant woods and meadows, these children would grow to maturity and be prepared for life. Hugh Grant, when he put the waif into her arms, had given her this new kingdom. It was to be henceforth her life.

She took with her the organist's widow, who was alone in the world, without bond or desire, and shortly afterwards the Venables joined them. At first Venable had gone back to the City, to help in the labors of reconstruction. But "after the banks were open and the saloons," as he told Alexandra, he lost interest in the game, for, as he had predicted, the City was recreating itself precisely as before, — only larger, richer. "And anyway," he said, "I have worked enough for one man, earned enough money, and brought one family to the producing stage. Now I want to play with you and see what we can make of your children!"

So these people busied themselves with turning the magnificent estate of Paradise Valley into a little working world. They kept the farms, the fish-ponds, the dairies, the gardens, — most of the manifold activities of the place. But instead of the deathly quiet, the atmosphere of seclusion and selection, in which servants and game had flourished, Paradise Valley became busy and noisy, and its gates stood open for all the world to come within and see what was going on. Many old friends and acquaintances journeyed from the City to visit the beautiful mistress of old Arnold's estate, and to look over her "fad," as the family of foundlings at Paradise Valley was commonly called. Michael Peter Ravi came once, but being especially busy with his railroads at this time, and receiving small encouragement from Alexandra, he did not repeat the visit. President Nathaniel Butterfield was more pertinacious, and in spite of his many activities in the rebuilding of the City, — committee meetings, dinner speeches, addresses, the entertainment of distinguished guests, etc., — he found time to renew his suit for the hand of Arnold's daughter. He regarded her family as an amiable philanthropy, becoming to a rich widow, and as such professed the liveliest interest in Paradise Valley, hinting broadly that it would make a suitable department of "sociological investigation" for the university.

But when he realized how seriously Alexandra considered her purpose, he undertook to show her the folly of her ideas.

It was especially a matter of lively dispute between Alexandra and the college president what sort of education her brood should be given to fit them best for life.

"That would depend," suggested Alexandra, "what one expected their life to be."

"Certainly! But, my dear lady, you cannot undertake to assure all these wards of yours leisure —"

"Surely not!"

"Well, then, in the struggle for existence —"

"Is that the only life to be expected for them?"

"In the competitive world, where they must fight their way —"

"Suppose," interrupted Alexandra, smiling, "I do not want them to fight their way, as you say?"

"But, but," stammered the college president, bewildered by this clever woman's ignorance of fundamental conceptions, "that's life, dear lady! And you are in danger of unfitting them for their destiny. All this is very pretty!" He nodded over the work benches that had been installed in the handsome garage. "But this idea of giving each one his own interests — occupations — won't work. They've got to fight their way, make their living in an evolutionary world, for which they must be adapted."

"Yes, they must earn their bread: we hope to fit them to do that, at least."

"But you must give them a chance for success in the struggle with their fellows. Life is life!" he concluded solemnly

"A life for a life is not life," she said softly.

"Life is life," he repeated didactically; "and you can't make it over, my dear woman!"

"That is what we hope to do!" she replied buoyantly. "At least for these foundlings."


So the university president gave up his attempt to convince her of the sentimentality and folly of her ideals. He said something about the "waste of her rich opportunities, the waste of herself," designing a nearer approach to his theme; but she smiled at him coldly, observing:—

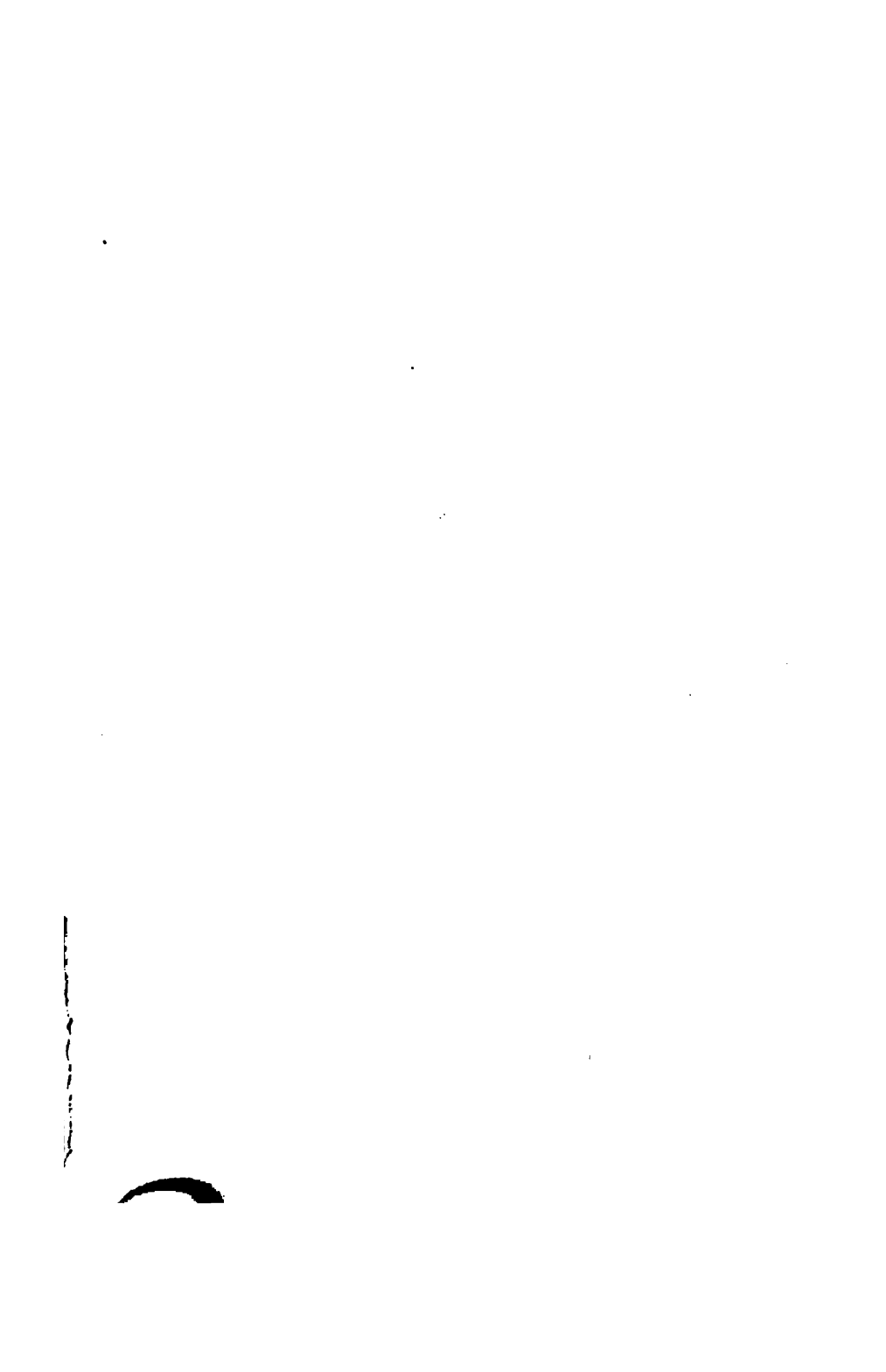
"I have never in my life felt that I was living so much as now."

Alexandra's smile put an end to his suit and his argument. So Butterfield was driven back to the station through the beautiful forest, deploring the erratic character of the Arnold blood, and sentimentalism in women.

Alexandra went her way, seeking to make beautiful lives out of these waifs placed by fate in her hands, teaching them to value possessions little, to value life — the supreme privilege of being — enormously, to regard all labor as of equal use and honor, and the end of living as something quite beyond the art of getting a living. In spite of the jeers of friends and the sneers of Gossom and Todd (in *Ambition*, which had been revived opportunely with the reviving City), Alexandra maintained serenely her faith in her ideal. It is too soon to say how her foundlings fared when they strayed, at manhood and womanhood, beyond the walls of Paradise Valley.

It was, at least, a large and happy family, presided over by a beautiful woman, whose face never lost that radiance which came to it the night of the great disaster when she and Hugh Grant met and parted forever.





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